

DANGEROUS WEAPONS: THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT

DAZZLE YOUR OPPONENTS!



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Preface

A *Dangerous Weapons* project in the Queen's Gambit may at first appear a little surprising, but it is not just the ancient Queen's Gambit Declined which was investigated by your authors. On the contrary, the Semi-Slav, the Slav, the Queen's Gambit Accepted and even the likes of the Albin and the Chigorin came under the microscope as we searched for dangerous new variations, as well as for wrongly-neglected lines to rehabilitate.

By meeting 1 d4 with 1...d5, Black initially sets out quite a solid store. It is usually up to White whether or not to allow Black the chance to complicate the game, as he does when he meets the QGA with 3 e4 or the Semi-Slav with 5 Bg5. Thus it should not come as a huge surprise to discover that the majority of the *Dangerous Weapons* in this book are for White. Furthermore, by and large Black's sharper options have either amassed a sizeable chunk of theory, especially the huge Semi-Slav complex, or are simply unsound: for instance, I was unable, despite some effort, to resuscitate the Dutch-Peruvian Gambit. Nevertheless, unexplored and very interesting paths for Black were still found: not so surprisingly in the case of both the QGA and the Slav, but perhaps more so in the venerable Exchange Variation of the QGD.

Throughout this project, I have been very impressed by the creativity and diligence of my co-authors. I hope that you enjoy studying their contributions as much as I have done. Glenn Flear was responsible for chapters 1, 9, 10, 13 and 14; Chris Ward wrote chapters 2, 5, 7 and 8; and I contributed chapters 3, 4, 6, 11 and 12.

Richard Palliser,
York,
December 2007

Series Introduction

The original concept behind *Dangerous Weapons* was to take a major chess opening and to approach it in a completely different way: to concentrate on variations that are ambitious, sharp, innovative, disruptive, tricky, enjoyable to analyse; ones not already weighed down by mountains of theory, and ones unfairly ignored or discredited. To me this seemed like an author's paradise, which I'm sure contributed somewhat towards the inspiration behind this series!

The main motivation behind studying major openings in such a way is to be able to present the reader (not forgetting the author!) with a considerable number of fresh, hard-hitting opening weapons for both White and Black; in some cases to create repertoires and in others to enhance and rejuvenate existing ones.

What is a Dangerous Weapon?

For the purpose of choosing opening variations for this series, usually a *Dangerous Weapon* fits into one or more of these overlapping categories:

1) Moves that create complex, original positions full of razor-sharp tactics and rich positional ideas where creative, attacking play is rewarded; moves which are new, rare or very fresh, leaving plenty of scope for research.

It should be pointed out that even though mainline theory produces a vast number of wonderfully complicated positions, these opening variations lose out heavily in the 'danger' stakes. No matter how sharp and difficult the position, the opening phase is nowhere near as hazardous for your opponent if he is able to fall back on that comfort blanket known as theory. I've played plenty of incredibly sharp lines without any real fear simply because of reasonable book knowledge and some solid home preparation. Thus in *Dangerous Weapons* the emphasis has mainly been on non-theoretical lines, where your opponent is left to his own devices at a very early stage.

2) Moves that are highly ambitious; ones which aim for total domination.

Perfect for those not satisfied with a quiet theoretical edge as White and eager to search for a big advantage or even a direct refutation, albeit at some risk; or for those as Black who prefer to strive for the initiative at any cost, preferring this over a manageable disadvantage or sterile equality.

3) Moves that have been previously ignored, discarded or discredited by theory, perhaps unfairly so or maybe for the wrong reasons.

Discredited lines can be especially dangerous – the psychological element cannot be ignored. Facing an opening like this, I find myself asking the question, ‘Why is he playing this variation if it is meant to be bad?’ Often there is a very good reason (a logical improvement, perhaps, which overturns a previous assessment), and in any case how are you supposed to remember a hypothetical 15-move refutation when you only browsed it in a book once, and that was a few years ago?

4) Moves that are visually shocking; moves which seem to contradict the laws of the game.

Disregarding the question of objective merit for the moment, there’s no doubt that a crazy-looking move has at the very least some psychological value. Unleashed on an opponent, it can produce a range of emotions: uncontrolled laughter, perhaps followed by over-confidence; anger (at being insulted by such a move) followed by over-aggression; or perhaps discomfort, followed by timidity. Of course you may instead encounter understanding followed by objectivity – you have to pick and choose your opponents.

Dangerous for Whom?

It would be difficult, probably impossible, to guarantee that every single variation in this book is 100% sound. You have to understand that in some cases ‘dangerous’ can mean ‘dangerous for both sides’. What I do expect, however, is that your opponent’s ride throughout the opening should be far bumpier than yours!

Guiding You Through

Throughout the book there are various icons together with explanatory notes to emphasize significant points. They should be fairly self-explanatory, but here’s a brief summary:



DANGEROUS WEAPON! This signifies a game, variation, sub-variation or position where the Dangerous Weapon has obviously produced the desired effect.



BEWARE! Pointing out immediate danger for the player using the Dangerous Weapon.



ROLL THE DICE! Signifying a variation or sub-variation which is perhaps more suited for games with short time-limits or for players who enjoy taking risks.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: This indicates a transposition to a different opening variation. Using different move orders to reach a desirable position or to trick your opponent into something with which he is unfamiliar is becoming a weapon of increasing value.

As the title suggests, *Dangerous Weapons* may not be for the faint-hearted! More than anything, it is aimed at players of all levels who like to be entertained, those who are happy to try out fun-to-play openings at their local chess club, on the Internet, in tournaments, wherever they choose to play.

Good luck studying and playing your *Dangerous Weapons*!

John Emms
Everyman Chess

Chapter One

Playing ...b5 with Confidence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 b5!? (Diagram 1)

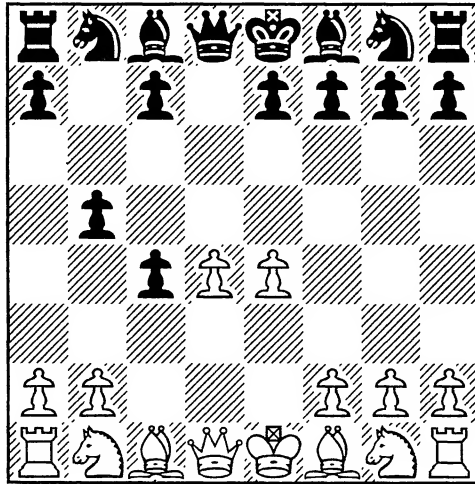


Diagram 1 (W)

The Queen's Gambit Accepted is one of those openings that is generally considered solid but not very exciting. Most of the time both sides are mainly concerned with harmonious development and subtle differences to their set-ups. Although

it's true that Black hangs on to the gambit pawn in certain variations such as 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6, most standard lines lead to White regaining it without too much trouble.

However, I shall be looking at a rather ambitious approach for the second player. In fact I'll be investigating a whole collection of downright cheeky systems where Black obliges White to fight for material equality!

The big idea is to complicate the struggle straight away and so generate winning chances. There is a measure of risk, but not excessively so. These lines have sometimes been underestimated by theory, but the main reason for their lack of popularity is that simply the idea of playing an early ...b5 or even ...Be6 looks like a beginner's approach.

□ **F.Vallejo Pons** ■ **G.Kasparov**

Linares 2005

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 e6

Now White might play 4 e3, taking play into one of the main lines of the QGA after 4...Nf6 5 Bxc4 c5, etc. Thus our main focus below will be on both 3...a6 and 3...c6, and after the latter, 4 e4 b5 5 a4 e6 takes play back into Vallejo Pons-Kasparov.

4 e4 b5!? (Diagram 2)

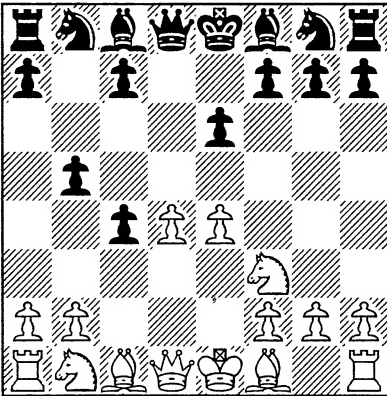


Diagram 2 (W)

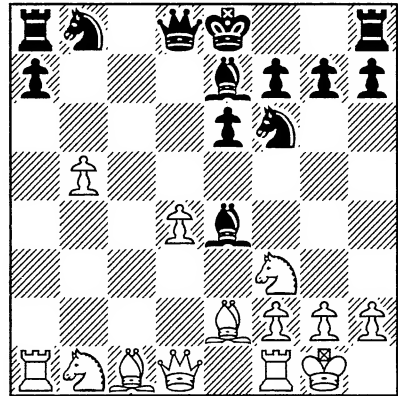


Diagram 3 (B)

So it seems that even the top player in the world has been attracted to this idea. Why allow White to recapture on c4 free of charge?

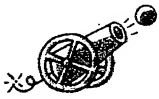
5 a4 c6 6 axb5

The alternatives are 6 b3 and 6 Nc3, both of which are examined below.

6...cxb5 7 b3 Bb7 8 bxc4

Also possible is 8 Nbd2, and after 8...Bb4, only now 9 bxc4: for instance, 9...Bxe4 10 cxb5 Nf6 11 Be2 0-0 12 0-0 Bd5 13 Ba3 Bxa3 14 Rxa3 Nbd7 15 Qa1 Qb8, with slight pressure for White, was D.Bocharov-P.Kotsur, Abu Dhabi 2004. Although this looks acceptable from Black's point of view, I prefer the more recent try 9...Nf6!? 10 e5 Bxf3 11 Qxf3 Qxd4 12 Rb1 Bxd2+ 13 Bxd2 Ne4, when Black stood well in D.Bocharov-S.Mazé, Warsaw 2005.

8...Bxe4 9 cxb5 Nf6 10 Be2 Be7 11 0-0 (Diagram 3)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Material is equal but the early flurry on the queenside has left its traces. One notable feature of what follows is that, compared to many IQP positions, play is mainly on the queenside.

11...0-0

Potential black players could also investigate the subtleties of delaying castling. Indeed, White hasn't been very successful against 11...Nbd7!? 12 Nc3 Bb7 13 Ne5 Qc7!: for example, 14 Nxd7 Nxd7 15 Qd3 0-0 16 Ba3 Bxa3 17 Rxa3 a6!, exchanging the cramping b-pawn, was very comfortable for Black in S.Halkias-E.Van den Doel, Turin Olympiad 2006, as was 14 Bf3 Qxc3 15 Bxb7 Qxa1 16 Bxa8 0-0 17 Nc6 Rxa8 18 Nxe7+ Kh8 in E.Bacrot-A.Kharlov, France League 2001.

12 Nc3 Bb7 13 Bf4

After 13 Ne5 a6?! 14 Bf3 Nd5 15 Nxd5 exd5 16 Rb1 Qb6 17 Be2, White kept the advantage in V.Anand-A.Karpov, Las Palmas 1996. However, Kasparov would no doubt have had an improvement on this up his sleeve. It may have been based on 13...Nd5, after which 14 Bd2 Qb6 15 Qa4 Nxc3 16 Bxc3 Bd5 17 Bc4 Rc8 18 Bxd5 exd5 19 Bb4 Bxb4 20 Qxb4 Nc6! was P.Tregubov-D.Reinderman, German League 2000, in which Black managed to equalize.

13...Bb4 14 Na4 Nbd7 15 Qb3 Nd5 (Diagram 4)

The disadvantage of 13 Bf4 is that this bishop now has to move again.

16 Bg5 Be7 17 Bd2

Black is very solid after 17 Bxe7 Qxe7.

17...a6 18 b6

White's isolated d-pawn is unlikely to give him too many problems to draw after the safer 18 bxa6 Bxa6 19 Bxa6 Rxa6.

18...Bc6 19 Ne5?!

Better would be 19 Rfc1, because after 19...Bxa4 20 Qxa4 N7xb6 21 Qb3, White would regain the chronically weak a-pawn.

Dangerous Weapons: The Queen's Gambit

19...Nxe5 20 dxe5 Nxb6!?

Kasparov rarely misses such a tactical opportunity.

21 Nxb6

White would probably be OK after 21 Qxb6 Qxd2 22 Qxc6 Qxe2 23 Nb6 Rad8 24 Nd7.

21...Qxd2 22 Nxa8 Qxe2 23 Nc7 Qxe5 (Diagram 5)

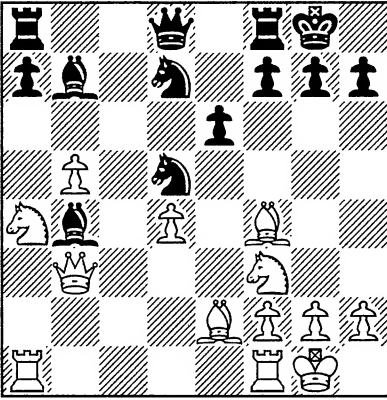


Diagram 4 (W)

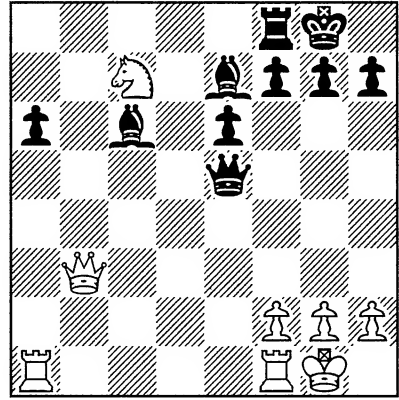


Diagram 5 (W)

Black has great play for the exchange with his bishop-pair.

24 Qg3 Qf5 25 Rxa6 Be4 26 Ra7 Bc5 27 Ra5?

Vallejo attempts to set a trap but Kasparov finds a hole in his opponent's analysis! Can you see what Vallejo overlooked? Instead the position remains unclear after 27 Ra4.

27...Bxf2+! 28 Qxf2 Qxa5 29 Nxe6 (Diagram 6)

Now Black has a resource that the Spaniard clearly must have overlooked.

29...Bxg2! 0-1

Black emerges two clear pawns to the good after both 30 Kxg2 Qd5+ and 30 Qxg2 Qb6+, while 30 Nxf8 Bxf1 31 Nxh7 is refuted by 32...Bd3 32 Qe3 Qa1+ 33 Kf2 Qf1+ 34 Kg3 Kxh7.

Although Kasparov played the pawn-protecting ...b5, he still returned his material advantage fairly swiftly for free development. The resulting middlegames retain plenty of tension and offer a playable, if not fully equal, game for Black.

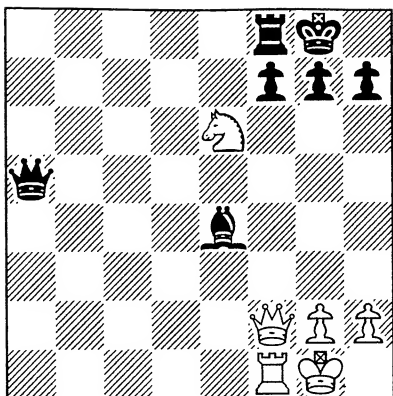


Diagram 6 (B)

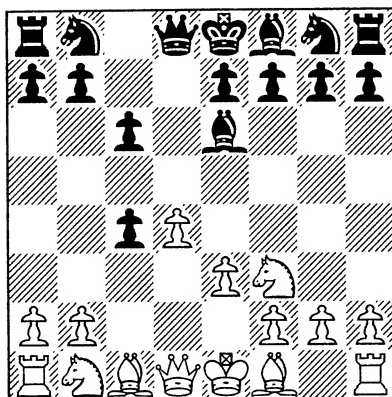


Diagram 7 (W)

□ G.Grigorov ■ M.Vasilev

Bulgarian Team Championship 2006

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3

After 2 c4 dxc4, both 3 e3 Be6 4 Nf3 c6 and 3 Nf3 c6 4 e3 Be6 reach the same position as the game after Black's fourth move.

2...c6!?

A cunning move order that is worth remembering.

3 c4 dxc4 4 e3 Be6 (Diagram 7) 5 Nc3

The critical line. The main alternative, 5 a4, is covered in the 'Looking a Little Deeper' section, below.

5...b5

As a rule of thumb in such positions, with White's knight placed on c3 Black can play ...b5 with confidence, as if Black is at some point obliged to play ...b4 he then gains a tempo.

6 a4 b4 7 Ne4 Nf6 8 Nxf6+

White's best option isn't clear at this point. The other three reasonable knight moves are covered below.

8...exf6 9 Bd2 Nd7 10 Rc1 (Diagram 8) 10...c3!

The gambit pawn cannot be maintained for long so Black decides to modify the structure to obtain a passed pawn. Experience so far suggests that this is Black's best approach. Instead the 10...c5 11 Bxc4 Bxc4 12 Rxc4 a5 13 Qc2 Nb6 14 Qe4+ Be7

15 Rxc5, of M.Krasenkow-J.Horvath, Budapest 2004, clearly favoured White.



ROLL THE DICE! Worthy of consideration too is the slightly speculative 10...Nb6!? 11 a5 c3 12 bxc3 Nc4, preparing to meet 13 cxb4 Nxd2 14 Qxd2 Rb8 15 Rb1 with 15...Qxa5!

White does better here with 13 Bxc4, although 13...Bxc4 14 cxb4 Bb5 15 Ng1 Bd6 Ne2 Qe7 17 Rb1 0-0 18 0-0 Rab8, gave Black almost enough compensation in V.Sakalauskas-I.Starostits, Tallinn 2006.

11 bxc3 b3 12 c4 b2 13 Rb1 Rb8 14 Qc2 Qb6 15 e4

Instead 15 d5 cxd5 16 cxd5 Bxd5 17 Bb5 can be safely met by 17...a6 18 Bxd7+ Kxd7, as Black's king will only be temporarily exposed.

15...Bb4 16 h3 0-0 (Diagram 9)

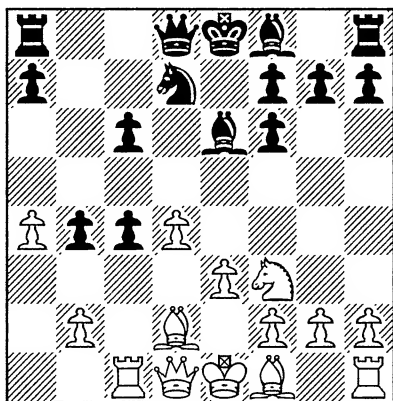


Diagram 8 (B)

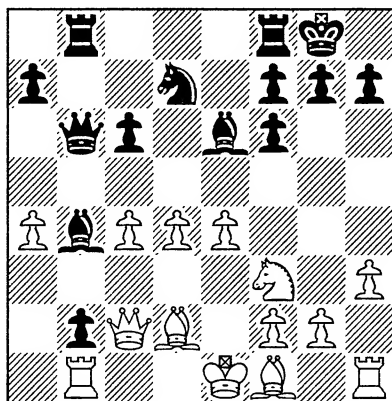


Diagram 9 (W)

Black completes his development and maintains the advanced passed pawn for the moment. He seems to have equality, but must continue precisely.

17 Bd3 Bxd2+ 18 Qxd2 Rfe8?!

Better is 18...Rfd8! giving Black additional tactical possibilities down the d-file, such as with 19 0-0 Qb3 20 Rfe1 Ne5!.

19 0-0 Nf8 20 Rfe1 Qb4 21 d5

An inconvenience for Black as the centre is well and truly White's domain.

21...Bd7 22 Re2 Qa3

White holds everything together after 22...Qxa4 23 Rxb2 Rxb2 24 Qxb2 Qd1+ 25 Ne1 and can look forward to having the better pawn structure.

23 Ne1

And not 23 Rxb2?? which fails to 23...Rxb2 24 Qxb2 Qxd3.

23...Ng6 24 Rxb2 Nf4!

Staying alive through tactical means.

25 Qxf4 Rxb2 26 Rxb2 Qxb2 27 Qc7 Qb4 (Diagram 10)

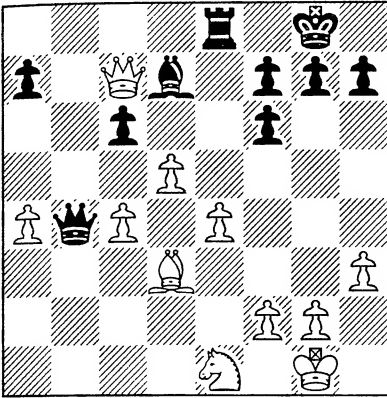


Diagram 10 (W)

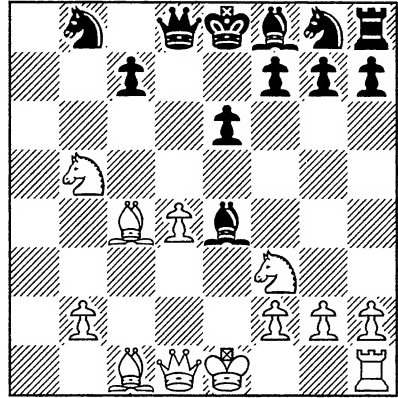


Diagram 11 (B)

28 Qxd7

Simpler is 28 Nf3! Qe7 29 d6 Qd8 30 Qxa7, with a clear advantage for White.

28...Qxe1+ 29 Kh2 Rf8 30 Qxa7

Although 30 dxc6 is tempting, Black can hold on with 30...Qxf2 31 c7 Qf4+ 32 Kg1 Qe3+ 33 Kf1 Qc5.

30...Qc3 31 Bf1 Qe5+ 32 g3 Rc8 33 a5 c5 34 Bg2 Qc7 35 Qa6 Rd8 36 f4 h5 37 h4 Qd6 38 Qa7 Rb8 39 Kh3 Rb3 40 Kh2 Rb8 41 Kh3 g6

After 41...Rb3, White can still try for the full point with 42 Qa8+ Kh7 43 e5 fxe5 44 Qc6 Qe7 45 Be4+ g6 46 f5.

42 Kh2 Kg7 43 a6? Rb6

Now it's Black who is trying to win.

44 e5 fxe5 45 fxe5 Rxa6 46 Qb7 Qb6 47 Qe7 Ra7 48 Qg5 Ra2 49 d6 Qb2 50 Qf6+ Kg8 51 Qf3 Qf2 52 Kh3 Qxf3 53 Bxf3 Kf8 54 g4 Ra3 55 Kg3 Rc3 56 gxh5 gxh5 57 Kf4 Rxc4+ 58 Kg5 Rd4 59 Bxh5 c4 60 e6 fxe6 61 Bg6 Kg7 0-1

In the following game an amateur is able to win with an early ...b5 against an experienced Grandmaster.

□ I.Farago ■ V.Hirschberg

Nuremberg 2007

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 a6 4 e4 b5 5 a4 Bb7 6 Nc3 e6

With this particular move order, Black can live without playing ...c6 as any capture on b5 can be met by capturing on e4.

7 axb5 axb5 8 Rxa8 Bxa8 9 Nxb5 Bxe4 10 Bxc4 (Diagram 11) 10...Bxf3?!

The alternative is 10...Bb4+! which I believe to be the most precise, as we will see below.

11 Qxf3 Bb4+ 12 Ke2 c6!?

White was also better after 12...Ne7 13 Bf4 Ba5 14 Ra1 Bb6 15 Qb7 0-0 16 Bxc7 in J.Adler-N.Sulava, Budapest 1990, and Black had to grovel to draw.

13 Bf4!

Sacrificing a piece to retain the initiative. White is doing well, but this game does illustrate that even strong players can get confused by the unusual complications initiated by our favourite early ...b5.

13...cxb5 14 Bxb5+ Nd7

White can engineer a better queen ending after 14...Kf8!?, such as with 15 Qb7 Bd6 16 Rc1 Ne7 17 Bxd6 Qxd6 18 Rc8+ (18 Rc7 is not advantageous after 18...g5 19 Qxb8+ Kg7) 18...Nxc8 19 Qxc8+ Ke7 20 Qxh8 Nc6 21 Bxc6 Qxc6 22 Qxg7.

15 Ra1

Threatening 16 Ra8.

15...Qb6 (Diagram 12)

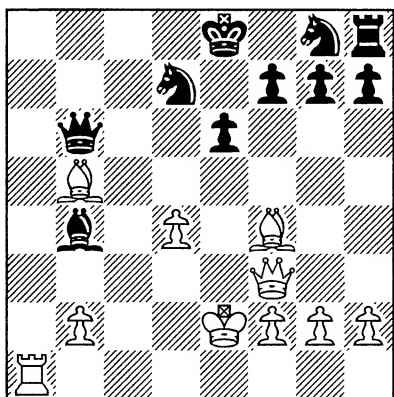


Diagram 12 (W)

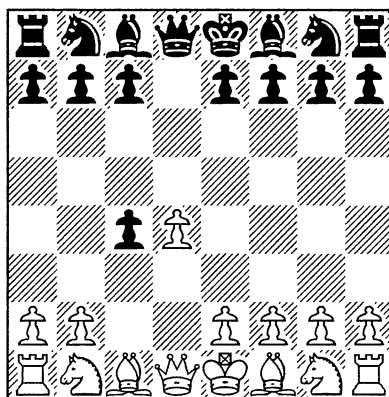


Diagram 13 (W)

16 Qa8+?

The wrong order! Better is 16 Bxd7+ Kxd7 17 Qa8 Qb5+ 18 Ke3 when Black is in dire straits: his king is very exposed and the extra piece useless.

16...Ke7 17 Bxd7 Nf6! 18 Qxh8 Qxd4 19 Kf1 Qxf4 20 Bb5

If 20 Bxe6, then 20...Bc5! anyway.

20...Bc5

Black suddenly has the attack!

21 Kg1 Ng4 22 Qe8+ Kf6 23 Qd8+ Kg6 24 Qd3+ Kg5 25 h4+ Kh6 26 Qf3 Bxf2+ 0-1

Although Black won these three illustrative games, they were admittedly far from convincing. So it's time we examined these lines in detail to see if and when Black can play ...b5 with confidence.

Looking a Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 (Diagram 13)

Black can now confuse matters against White's three main options:

A: 3 e4

B: 3 e3

C: 3 Nf3

I don't rate 3 Nc3 very highly due to 3...a6!, after which 4 e4?! (consistent but dubious; objectively best is 4 a4 but Black is fine after 4...Nc6) 4...b5 5 a4 b4 6 Na2 Bb7 7 f3 Nc6! 8 d5 Na5 9 Nxb4 (or 9 Bd2 e6) 9...e6 was already better for Black in V.Poletov-V.Afromeev, Tula 2005.

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4

White immediately occupies the centre, but there are opportunities for Black to gain a tempo against this pawn. So the follow up...

3...b5!?

...is in my opinion provocative and, as we shall see, perfectly playable!

4 a4 (Diagram 14)

In this position there are two ideas for Black:

A1: 4...Bb7

A2: 4...c6!

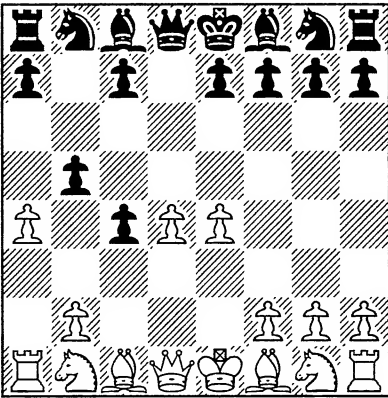


Diagram 14 (B)

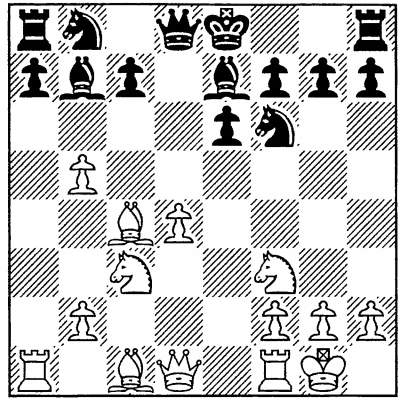


Diagram 15 (W)

A1) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 b5 4 a4 Bb7

I don't fully believe in this against precise play, but it is worth a look for comparative purposes.

5 axb5!

Karolyi recently examined 5 f3?! in a survey in *New in Chess Yearbook 84*, but I don't rate this move in view of 5...a6 6 b3 (the 6 axb5 axb5 7 Rxa8 Bxa8 8 b3, of L.Konings-J.Van de Vreede, Dutch League 1994, can also be met with the vigorous response 8...e5!, after which 9 bxc4 Bb4+ 10 Bd2 Bxd2+ 11 Nxd2 Qxd4 12 cxb5 Nd7 is about equal) 6...e5! 7 d5 (if 7 axb5 then 7...Bb4+ 8 Kf2 Bc5!) 7...Bb4+ 8 Bd2 Bxd2+ 9 Qxd2 cxb3 10 axb5 axb5 11 Rxa8 Bxa8 12 Bxb5+ c6!.

5...Bxe4 6 Nc3 Bb7 7 Nf3 Nf6 8 Bxc4 e6 9 0-0 Be7 (Diagram 15)

Now White has more than one way to ensure an advantage, including:

- a) 10 Qe2 0-0 11 Rd1 Nd5 12 Ne5 c6 13 Nxd5 cxd5 14 Bd3 Bd6 15 Bf4 Qe7 16 Rdc1 Nd7 17 Nc6, and Black clearly hadn't equalized in V.Anand-R.Hübner, Dortmund 1997.
- b) 10 Qe2 Nbd7 11 Ne5 0-0 12 Rd1 Nb6 13 Bd3 Nbd5 was S.Lee Wang-H.Ardiansyah, Singapore 1997, and now White should prefer 14 Na4! Nb4 15 Nc5 Qd5 16 Nxb7 Qxb7 17 Bc4.

A2) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 b5 4 a4 c6! (Diagram 16)

The move to concentrate one's efforts on.

5 axb5

Alternatively:

a) 5 Nf3 transposes to Line C12.

b) 5 Nc3 b4 6 Na2 Nf6 7 e5 Nd5 8 Bxc4 e6 transposes to a variation which usually arises after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 dxc4, etc. This position is quite well known and was indeed covered by me in an article in *New in Chess Yearbook 82*. Note especially that 9 Nf3 Be7 10 Bd2 Ba6!? is then interesting.

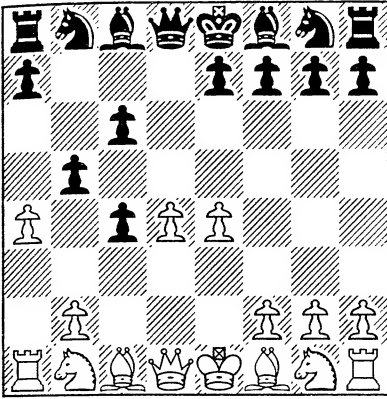


Diagram 16 (W)

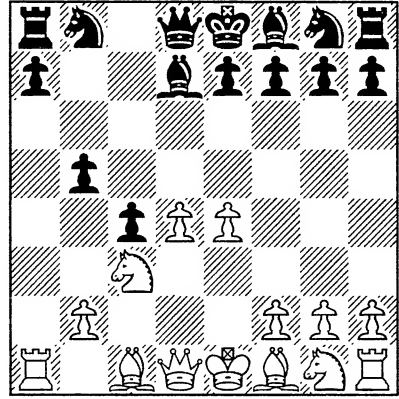


Diagram 17 (W)

c) 5 b3 e5 (possible too is 5...Nf6!? 6 e5 Nd5 7 axb5 cxb5 8 bxc4 bxc4 9 Bxc4 e6 10 Nf3 Be7 11 0-0 0-0 12 Qb3 Nb6, as in O.Gladyszev-I.Almasi, Balatonbereny 1996) 6 axb5 (instead 6 dxe5 Qxd1+ 7 Kxd1 cxb3 8 axb5 Bc5 is promising for Black) 6...cxb5 7 bxc4 Bb4+!, with a good game: for example, 8 Bd2 (if 8 Ke2 then simply 8...Nc6) 8...Qxd4 9 Bxb4 Qxa1 10 Nf3 Nc6 11 Bc3 Qa4 12 cxb5 Qxe4+ 13 Be2 Nd4 14 Nxd4 exd4 15 Bxd4 Bb7 was G.Gärtner-E.Vegh, Budapest 1997, and Black went on to win.

5...cxb5 6 Nc3

Instead 6 b3 e5 returns play to note 'c' to White's 5th move.

6...Bd7 (Diagram 17)

Ugly, but it holds things together. Karolyi shows that the natural alternative 6...Bb7? doesn't gel: 7 Nxb5 Bxe4 8 Bf4! e5 9 dxe5 Bb4+ 10 Bd2, with a clear advantage to White.

7 Nf3

White continues his development and leaves Black with a seemingly misplaced bishop. Less common is 7 d5 which can be met by my suggestion of 7...Qb6! (I don't like 7...a5 due to both 8 Nf3 Na6 9 Ne5 Nc5 10 Be3 Nb3 11 Nxd7 Qxd7 12 Qxb3, and the 8 e5 e6 9 d6 Bc6 10 Nf3 Nd7 11 Nd4 Qb6 12 Be3 Qb7 13 Nxc6 Qxc6 14 Bd4 Nh6 15 Be2, of K.Pews-E.Schüller, correspondence 2002) 8 Be3 (or 8 Nf3 e6

9 Be3, and then the calm 9...Qb7) 8...Qd6!? 9 Nf3 e5 10 dxe6 Qxd1+ 11 Rxd1 fxe6 12 Ne5 Bb4 and Black is OK.

7...e6 8 Be2 Nf6 9 0-0 (Diagram 18)

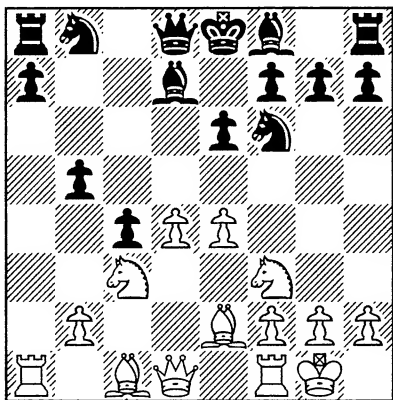


Diagram 18 (B)

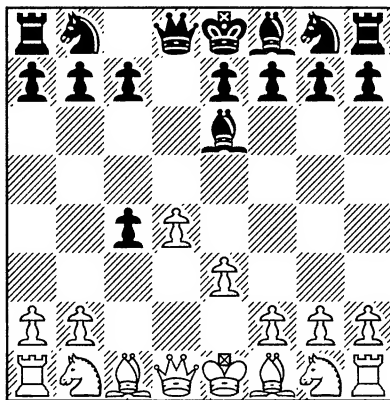


Diagram 19 (W)

How should Black continue?

- a) Surely not by 9...b4?! 10 e5 bxc3 11 exf6 cxb2 12 Bxb2 (rather than 12 fxg7?! Bxg7! 13 Bxb2 Bb5) 12...gxf6 13 d5!, with advantage to White.
- b) Possible is the ambitious 9...Bb4!? 10 Bg5 h6 (or even 10...Qb6!?) 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 12 Ne5 and now 12...Qe7!?
- c) Ivan Sokolov, a fan of an early ...b5 in general, preferred 9...Be7 in a recent high-level encounter: 10 d5 exd5 (and not 10...b4?! 11 d6!) 11 exd5 (after 11 e5 Ne4, both 12 Nxd5 Bc6 13 Nxe7 Qxe7 14 Nd4 Qxe5 and 12 Qxd5 Nxc3 13 bxc3 Bc6, are fine for Black as mentioned by Ponomariov) 11...Bb4! (almost certainly an improvement over the 11...Qb6? of R.Ponomariov-I.Sokolov, Zafra 2007, which could have been met by 12 Be3! Bc5 13 Bxc5 Qxc5 14 Qd4!, and, as Ponomariov points out, White would be clearly better after both 14...Qxd4 15 Nxd4 b4 16 Na2 and 14...Qd6 15 Qe3+ Qe7 16 Ne5 0-0 17 Nxc4!) 12 Bg5 h6 13 Bh4 0-0 14 Nd4 g5 15 Bg3 Qb6, with counter-chances, as endorsed by Ponomariov.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! So although this variation needs further testing, Black seems to be able to live with his odd-looking bishop on d7.

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e3

Keeping things solid. Now the best way to at least temporarily hold on to the c4-

pawn is with the surprising...

3...Be6!? (Diagram 19)

I know it looks ugly but bear with me!



BEWARE! Instead 3...b5?! 4 a4 c6? falls for an ancient trap and is busted by 5 axb5 cxb5? 6 Qf3.

4 Nf3

If White prefers to regain the c-pawn with 4 Nc3 c6 5 a4 Nf6 6 Nf3 g6 7 Nd2 Bg7 8 Bxc4 Bxc4 9 Nxc4, Black hits back after castling with 9...0-0 10 0-0 c5!, as he did in F.Bernasconi-I.Starostits, Lugano 2005.

4...c6

So Black gums up his own development to gum up White's! One point is 5 Ng5?? Qa5+ when White can resign! Better are:

B1: 5 a4

B2: 5 Nc3

B1) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e3 Be6 4 Nf3 c6 5 a4 Nf6 (Diagram 20)

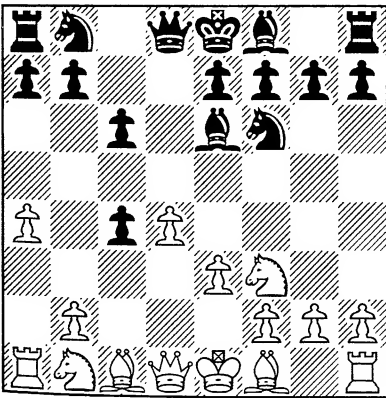


Diagram 20 (W)

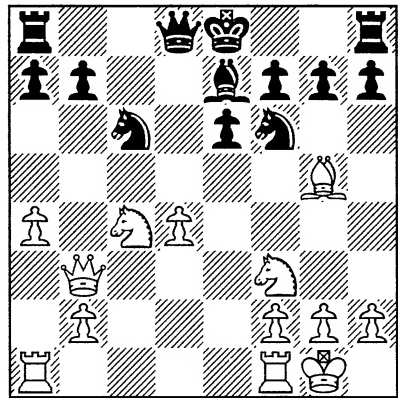


Diagram 21 (B)

6 Na3

White aims to regain the c-pawn with a calm game ahead. Sharper but more double-edged is 6 Nc3 g6 7 Ng5 Bd5 and then:

a) 8 e4 h6 9 exd5 hxg5 10 Bxc4 (Black was also OK after 10 dxc6 Nxc6 11 d5 Na5 12 Bxg5 Qd6 13 g3 Qe5+ 14 Be3 Bh6 in F.Vallejo Pons-R.Fontaine, French League 2005) 10...cxd5 11 Bb5+ Nc6 12 Bxg5 Bg7 13 h4 a6 14 Bxc6+ bxc6 15 Qf3 Rb8, gave Black decent counterplay in E.Bacrot-K.Landa, online blitz 2004.

b) If White tries the cagey 8 f3!?, Black might reply with 8...h6 9 Nh3 (otherwise 9 Nge4 Nbd7 10 Nd2 e5 11 Nxc4 exd4 12 exd4 Qe7+ 13 Kf2 0-0-0 yields unclear play) 9...g5!? (to avoid any ideas of Nf4, whereas 9...Bg7 10 e4 Be6 11 Nf4 is more comfortable for White) 10 e4 Be6 11 Nf2 Bg7 12 h4 (the alternative approach 12 Be3 Qa5 13 Be2 Na6 14 0-0-0 looks too slow and allows Black a promising position after 14...0-0-0) 12...Nh5! 13 d5 cxd5 14 exd5 Bxc3+! 15 bxc3 Qxd5 16 Qxd5 Bxd5 17 hxg5 Ng3 18 Rxh6 Rg8, which is about equal.

6...c5 7 Bxc4

Alternatively, 7 Nxc4 Nc6 8 Nce5 Bd5! (the key move) 9 Nxc6 bxc6 10 Be2 e6 11 0-0 Rb8 12 dxc5 Bxc5 13 Qc2 Qe7 14 Nd2 e5, yielded comfortable equality for Black in V.Teofilovic-E.Dizdarevic, Bizovac 2005.

7...Bxc4 8 Nxc4 Nc6 9 0-0

The simplifying 9 dxc5 Qxd1+ 10 Kxd1 Ne4 11 Ke2 Nxc5 is even nominally better for Black.

9...cxd4 10 exd4 e6 11 Bg5 Be7 12 Qb3 (Diagram 21)

This IQP position would seem to be benign, but there is still some poison in White's set-up:

a) After the 12...Nb4 13 Bxf6 gxf6 14 Ne3 Qd7 15 Rac1 0-0 16 d5! Nxd5 17 Rcd1 Rfd8 18 Nxd5 exd5 19 Nd4 Bc5, of L.Portisch-Z.Varga, Zalaegerszeg 2004, White had good compensation for his pawn.

b) I think that Black should have preferred 12...0-0!?: for example, 13 Qxb7 Nxd4 14 Nxd4 Qxd4 15 Rac1 (and not 15 Qxe7?! Nd5) 15...Bc5 16 Be3 Qe4 is equal.

B2) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e3 Be6 4 Nf3 c6 5 Nc3 b5 6 a4 b4 7 Ne4 Nf6 (Diagram 22) 8 Ng3

White has no fewer than three interesting alternatives and, although I have my own opinions, there is no consensus on which is best:

a) 8 Nxf6+ exf6 was seen in G.Grigore-M.Vasilev.

b) 8 Nc5!? is risky: for example, 8...Bd5 9 Qc2 e6 10 Bxc4 Bxc5 11 dxc5 Qa5 12 Bxd5 cxd5 13 Nd4 0-0 14 Bd2 Na6 saw the complications favour Black in O.Annageldyev-M.Vasilev, Izmir 2006.

c) After 8 Ned2, Black's best is to play the disruptive 8...c3 9 bxc3 bxc3, followed by a kingside fianchetto: 10 Nc4 g6 11 Ba3 Bg7 12 Bd3 0-0 13 0-0 Nbd7 14 Rc1 Rc8 15 Rxc3 c5, supplied full equality in Z.Gyimesi-Z.Varga, Croatian Team Championship 2000.

8...Bd5 9 Qc2 e6! 10 Bxc4

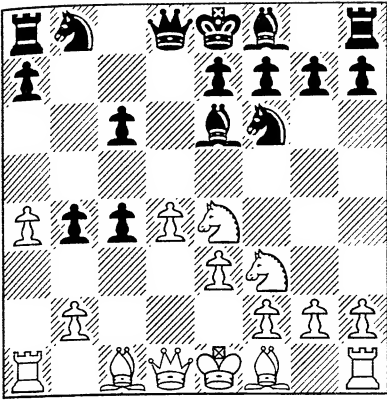


Diagram 22 (W)

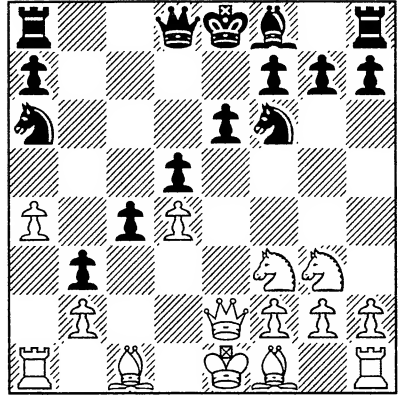
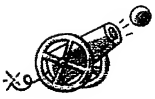


Diagram 23 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Although White wins a piece with 10 e4, Black has excellent compensation after 10...b3 11 Qe2 Na6 12 exd5 cxd5 (Diagram 23), with a couple of pawns and a big central bind.

10...Nbd7 11 e4 Bxc4 12 Qxc4 (Diagram 24)

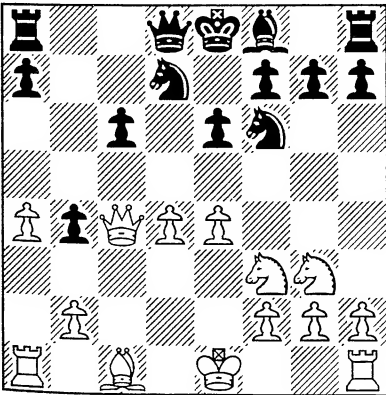


Diagram 24 (B)

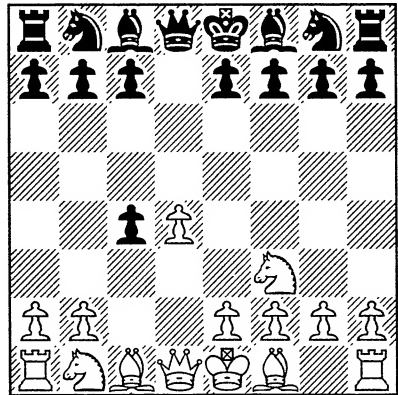


Diagram 25 (B)

This is a key position in my opinion. Black needs to play carefully to equalize, but

he should be able to. P.Cramling-P.Govcuyan, French League 2005, for example, continued 12...c5 13 Be3 cxd4 14 Bxd4 Be7 15 0-0 0-0 16 a5, when in my opinion White's opening pull can be nullified by 16...Rc8 17 Qa6 Rc7.

C) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 (Diagram 25)

The most commonly played move. Black now has two ambitious ideas that vary from the standard 3...Nf6:

C1: 3...c6

C2: 3...a6

C1) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 c6

We now have a further divide:

C11: 4 e3

C12: 4 e4

C11) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 c6 4 e3 b5?!



BEWARE! With White maintaining a solid centre, it's possible that the plan with ...b5 isn't convincing. Thus Black should probably prefer 4...Be6!? which transposes to Line B.

5 a4 e6 (Diagram 26) 6 axb5!

This is the critical move in my opinion. The complications after the main alternative 6 b3 are fascinating, but I believe that Black should be able to hold his own:

a) I suspect that the plausible 6...b4 doesn't fully equalize (because it gives away the c4-square too lightly), but is nevertheless playable, as 7 Bxc4 Nf6 8 0-0 Nbd7 9 Qe2 Be7 10 e4 0-0 11 a5 c5 12 d5 exd5 13 exd5 Bd6 14 Bb2 Re8 was in E.Lobron-M.Stangl, Garmisch Partenkirchen (rapid) 1994.

b) The sharper 6...Bb4+ is the principled response, after which 7 Bd2 Bxd2+ 8 Nfxd2 cxb3 (better than 8...a5?! 9 bxc4 b4 10 c5 Ne7 11 Nc4 0-0 12 Bd3 Ba6 13 Nbd2 Nd7 14 Ne4 Bxc4 15 Bxc4 e5, as in E.Gleizerov-E.Maljutin, Moscow 1992, which would have been much better for White after 16 Qf3!) 9 axb5 b2 10 Ra2 Ne7 (**Diagram 27**) reaches a fun position.

There was a lot of interest in this line in the mid-nineties with Ivan Sokolov being at the thick of the theoretical discussion. White can decide to capture the b2-pawn

immediately or ignore it for a while:

a) After 11 Rxb2 0-0, White does best to continue with 12 Qf3!? (this is more testing than 12 Nc3 Bb7 13 Nce4 Nd7 14 Nd6 Rb8 15 Nxb7 Rxb7 16 Bd3 c5 17 0-0 cxd4 18 exd4 Nf6, when Black had full equality in Xu Jun-I.Sokolov, Moscow Olympiad 1994), but even so after the continuation 12...Bb7 13 Bd3 Nd7 14 0-0 Rb8 15 Nc3 cxb5 (White retains a slight initiative following 15...c5 16 Qh3 h6 17 Ra1 cxd4 18 exd4 Qb6 19 Qh4 Nd5 20 Ne2) 16 Qh3 h6 17 Rxb5 a6 18 Rh5 Nf6 19 Rc5 Ned5, Black had achieved near equality in E.Gausel-I.Sokolov, Oslo (rapid) 1996.

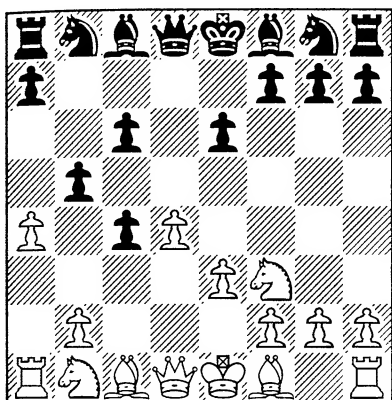


Diagram 26 (W)

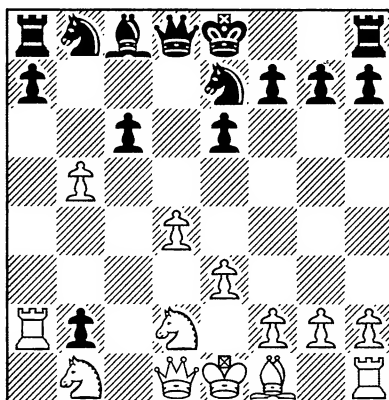


Diagram 27 (W)

b) Another tricky line is 11 Qb3 Bb7 12 Ne4 0-0 13 Nc5 Qb6, and only now lopping off the b-pawn with 14 Qxb2. The theory hasn't changed here for years and Black's best is 14...Rc8! (**Diagram 28**) 15 Nc3 (Black was even better after 15 bxc6 Bxc6 16 Nd2 e5 17 Nc4 Qxb2 18 Rxb2 exd4 19 Nd6 Rd8 20 Ndb7 Rf8 in B.Gulko-I.Sokolov, Groningen 1994) 15...cxb5 (dubious is 15...e5? because of 16 N3e4 Rd8 17 dxe5 cxb5 18 Nxb7 Qxb7 19 Nd6 Qd5 20 e4, and White had a big plus in A.Maric-V.Misanovic, Kishinev 1995) 16 Qxb5 Bc6 17 Qxb6 axb6 18 Rxa8 Bxa8 19 N5a4 Nd7! with equality, which improves over the 19...b5?! 20 Nxb5 Rc1+ 21 Kd2 Ra1 22 Nac3, of K.Hulak-N.Sulava, Zadar 1995, when Black's pseudo-activity didn't prove to be sufficient for the pawn.

All this can, however, be considered 'for the record' if 6 axb5 is as good as I think it is.

6...cxb5 7 b3 Bb4+

Black has also experimented with 7...Nf6, but without much success: 8 bxc4 bxc4 (or 8...b4 9 c5 a5 10 Ne5 Be7 11 Bb5+ Kf8 12 0-0 Qc7 13 Bb2, with a clear advantage for White in J.Piket-Xu Jun, Moscow Olympiad 1994) 9 Bxc4 Bd6 10 0-0 0-0 11

Nbd2 Bb7 was P.Lukacs-I.Almasi, Budapest 1995, and now White should continue with 12 Ba3!, keeping some advantage.

8 Bd2 Bxd2+ 9 Nbx d2 a5 10 bxc4 b4 (Diagram 29)

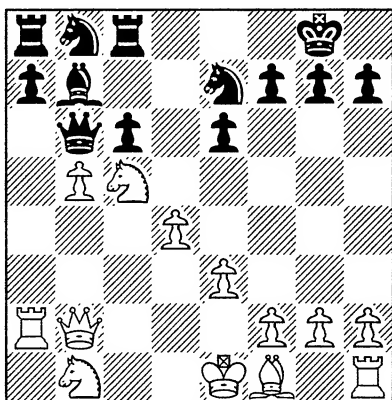


Diagram 28 (W)

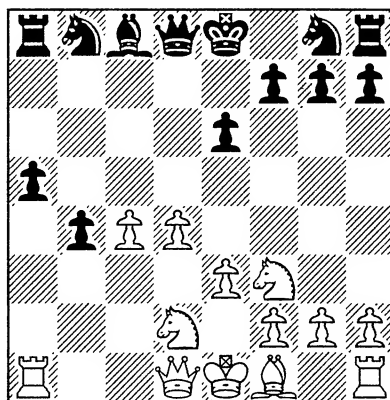


Diagram 29 (W)

Although this double-edged pawn structure is tempting, I have to admit that I prefer White. Here are a couple of typical examples: 11 Ne5 Nf6 12 Be2 (an immediate 12 Qa4+!? is perhaps even stronger) 12...Bb7 13 Bf3 Qc7 14 Qa4+ Nfd7 15 Bxb7 Qxb7 16 0-0 0-0 (R.Zysk-M.Stangl, German League 1994), and 11 c5 Nf6 12 Bb5+ Bd7 13 Qa4 0-0 14 e4!? Qc7 15 0-0 Bc6 16 Rfe1 Rd8 (S.Feller-P.Vavra, Pardubice 2007).

C12) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 c6 4 e4

White occupies the centre as quickly as possible.

4...b5 5 a4 e6 (Diagram 30)

The most trustworthy move. Instead my recent experiment with 5...Bb7 was hardly a blinding success: 6 b3 e5 7 bxc4 exd4 8 cxb5 Bb4+ 9 Bd2 Bxd2+ 10 Nbx d2 Nf6 11 Bd3 0-0 12 0-0 cxb5 13 axb5 left White on top in N.Pert-G.Flear, British Championship, Great Yarmouth 2007.

6 b3

The illustrative game Vallejo Pons-Kasparov featured the immediate 6 axb5 which doesn't lead to an advantage if Black knows his stuff. The other main option, 6 Nc3, can be met by 6...Bb4, transposing to the highly theoretical Abrahams-Noteboom variation. However for those seeking to avoid the beaten track then 6...b4 is reasonable: for example, 7 Ne2 Ba6 8 Ng3 Nf6 9 Bg5 Qa5 10 Be2 Nbd7 11

0-0 h6 was T.Gareev-A.Dreev, Moscow 2007, and 7 Na2 Ba6 8 Bd2 Nf6 9 Nxb4 Nxe4 10 Nxa6 Nxd2 11 Nxd2 Nxa6 12 Bxc4 Nb4 13 Nf3 Be7 14 0-0 0-0 15 Qe2 a5, S.Koutsin-M.Matlak, Czech League 1995, with a satisfactory game for Black in both cases.

6...Bb4+ 7 Bd2 Bxd2+ 8 Qxd2 Nf6 (Diagram 31)

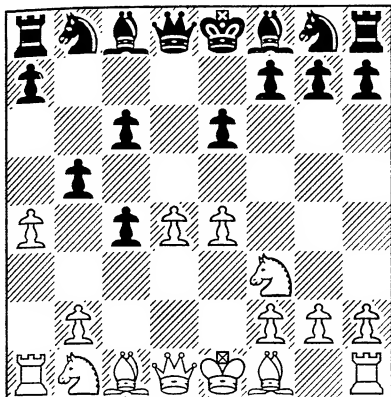


Diagram 30 (W)

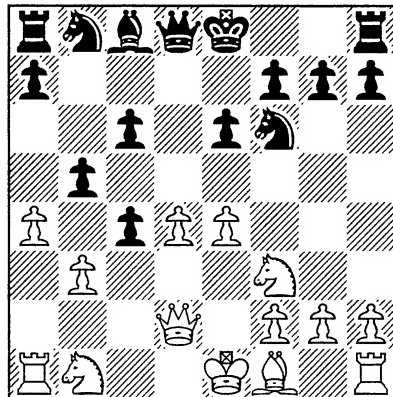


Diagram 31 (W)

The resulting complications are double-edged and rather unclear. The 9 axb5 cxb3 10 Nc3 0-0 11 Bd3 cxb5 12 Nxb5 Ba6 13 e5 Bxb5 14 Bxb5 Nd5 15 0-0 Nd7, of B.Villamayor-E.Gleizerov, Dubai 2004, and the 9 e5 Ne4!? 10 Qf4 Qa5+ 11 Nbd2 Nxd2 12 Nxd2 cxb3 13 Bd3 b2 14 Ra3 Nd7 15 0-0 f5 16 exf6 Nxf6 17 Qd6 Qd8 18 Qxc6+ Bd7 19 Qc5 Rc8, of J.Kristensen-S.B.Hansen, Aalborg 2007, being typical examples.

C2) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 a6 (Diagram 32)

Again White must decide how ambitious he feels:

C21: 4 e3

C22: 4 e4

C21) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 a6 4 e3 b5!? 5 a4 Bb7 6 b3

The problem for White with the straightforward 6 axb5 is that the position may simplify too much. After 6...axb5 7 Rxa8 Bxa8 8 b3 e6 9 bxc4 bxc4 (Diagram 33) practice has seen the following:

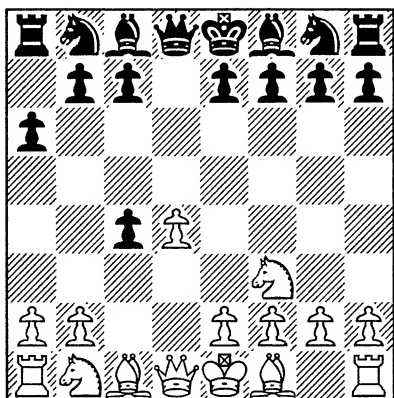


Diagram 32 (W)

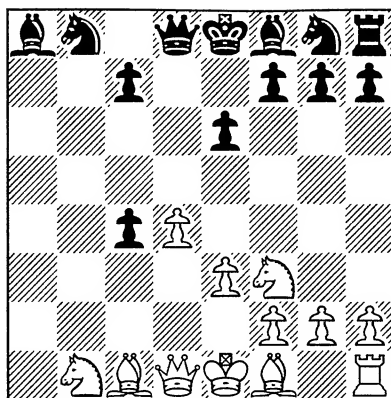


Diagram 33 (W)

a) White tried to seek a tactical solution in A.Volokitin-I.Khenkin, Mainz (rapid) 2007, with 10 Ne5!? Nd7 11 Qa4 Ngf6 12 Nc6?, but following 12...Nb6! 13 Qb5 Qd7 14 Na7 Ne4 15 Na3 Qxb5 16 N7xb5 Bb4+, he found himself in trouble. In this case White should have settled for equality with 12 f3 Bd6 13 Nxc4 0-0.

b) Normal is 10 Bxc4 when White can't generate any significant pressure: for example, 10...Nf6 11 0-0 Be7 12 Qa4+ Nbd7 13 Ne5 0-0 14 Nc6 Nb6 15 Nxe7+ Qxe7 16 Ba3 c5 17 Qc2 Nxc4 18 Qxc4 Qb7 19 f3 Nd5 was fine for Black in R.Kasimdzhanov-F.Konings, online blitz 2004, as was 10...Nd7 11 0-0 Ngf6 12 Nc3 Be7 13 d5 exd5 14 Nxd5 Nxd5 15 Bxd5 Bxd5 16 Qxd5 0-0 17 Nd4 Nf6 18 Qxd8 Rxd8 19 Nc6 Rd7, in G.Flear-D.Isonzo, St.Vincent 2003.

6...e6 7 bxc4 bxc4

Better than 7...b4?! 8 c5 a5 9 Bb5+ c6 10 Bc4 Nf6 11 Nbd2 Nbd7 12 0-0 Be7 13 e4, with an obvious advantage to White, V.Borovikov-B.Thorfinnsson, Pardubice 2005.

8 Bxc4 Nd7

Similar is 8...Nf6 9 0-0 c5 10 Ba3 Nbd7 11 Nbd2 Be7 12 Qe2 cxd4 13 Bxe7 Qxe7 14 Nxd4 0-0, as in E.Bacrot-I.Khenkin, German League 2007, when White has a nominal pull as he has slightly more space and a6 will need defending.

9 a5 Ngf6 10 0-0 Bd6 11 Nbd2 0-0 12 Qe2 c5 13 e4 (Diagram 34)

We have been following R.Knaak-B.Malich, Halle 1982. Black can now strike back with 13...cxd4! 14 e5 d3!, intending 15 Bxd3 (instead 15 Qe3 is met by 15...Ng4, and 15 Qe1 by 15...Bxf3 16 Nxf3 Qc7 17 exf6 Qxc4) 15...Bxe5 16 Bxh7+ Kxh7 17 Nxe5 Nxe5 18 Qxe5 Rc8.

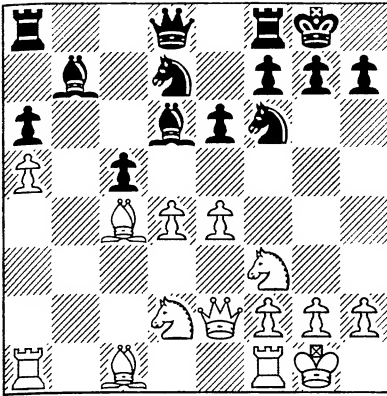


Diagram 34 (B)

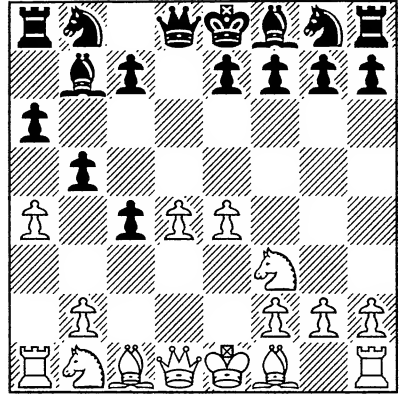


Diagram 35 (W)

C22) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 a6 4 e4 b5 5 a4 Bb7 (Diagram 35) 6 axb5

White can pressurize the queenside pawns in two other ways:

- a) Against 6 Nc3 an interesting try is 6...b4!? (for the solid alternative 6...e6 7 axb5 axb5 8 Rxa8 Bxa8 see the main line), after which 7 Bxc4 e6 8 Qb3 Nc6 9 a5 Nxd4 10 Nxd4 Qxd4 11 Be3 Qd7 12 f3 Bd6 13 Na4 Qe7 14 e5 Bxe5 15 Nc5 was S.Pedersen-M.Sadler, Cannes 1995, and now Pedersen's 15...Bc6!? is promising for Black.
- b) After 6 b3 Bxe4 7 Nc3 Bb7 8 axb5 axb5 9 Rxa8 Bxa8 10 bxc4 (Diagram 36),

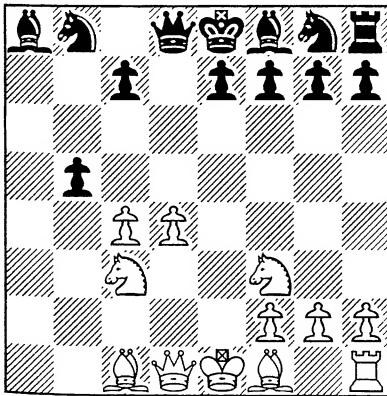


Diagram 36 (B)

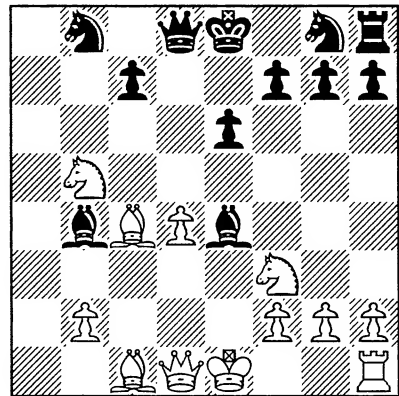


Diagram 37 (W)

the continuation 10...Bxf3 11 Qxf3 b4 12 c5 bxc3 13 Bb5+ Nd7 14 Bxd7+ forced an

immediate draw in D.Johansen-P.Nikolic, Gold Coast 2000. Black can also try for a longer game with 10...e6 11 Nxb5 Bxf3 12 gxf3 Bb4+ 13 Bd2 Bxd2+ 14 Qxd2 c6 15 Nc3 Ne7, as he did in A.Vaisser-R.Bagirov, Novosibirsk 1971, and if anything Black had the better chances due to his superior pawn structure.

6...axb5 7 Rxa8 Bxa8 8 Nc3 e6

This move offers decent chances of equality, but Black can try for more with 8...c6!?: for example, 9 Be2 e6 10 0-0 Nf6 11 Bg5 Be7 (perhaps 11...h6!? 12 Bxf6 gxf6) 12 Qa1 (if White tries 12 e5 Nd5 13 Bxe7 Qxe7 14 Ne4 0-0 15 Qa1 Nd7 16 Qa7??, then Black has 16...Nxe5) 12...Nbd7 13 d5 0-0 was T.Woodward-A.Baburin, British League 2002, and Black was already favourite.

9 Nxb5 Bxe4 10 Bxc4

This position was seen in the illustrative game Farago-Hirschberg. Black's most precise move is to first give check, i.e. 10...Bb4+! (**Diagram 37**) and now:

a) Korchnoi's sporting 11 Ke2!? is insufficient for an advantage: 11...Ne7 12 Bf4 Ba5 13 Qa4 Nbc6 14 Nd2 Bd5 (after 14...Bxg2!? the position becomes murky following 15 Rg1 Bd5! 16 Rxg7 Ng6) 15 Nb3 0-0!, with comfortable equality in V.Korchnoi-Y.Seirawan, Biel 1993

b) Objectively better is 11 Nc3, which may yield a shade of an edge: 11...Bxf3 12 Qxf3 Nf6 (or perhaps 12...Ne7!? 13 0-0 0-0 14 Rd1 c6) 13 0-0 0-0 14 Rd1 Nbd7 (possible too is 14...c6 15 Bf4 Bd6 16 Be5 Nd5 17 Ne4 Bxe5 18 dxe5 Nd7, which was solid enough for Black in B.Maksimovic-N.Sulava, Caorle 1989) 15 Bg5 Qa8 was V.Inkiou-A.Raetsky, French League 1998, and although White has the bishop-pair, Black should hold firm.

Conclusion

In these many variations, there seem to be plenty of nifty ideas for Black to create double-edged action. Furthermore, even if White manages to navigate these complex lines unscathed there's no guarantee that he can lay claim to any real advantage. Despite these offbeat lines not always being pretty on the eye, they look quite effective to me, and are certainly more original than the standard lines of the QGA and the Slav. So bearing all this mind, can you bring yourself to play ...b5 with confidence?

Chapter Two

Having Fun Against the ...a6 Slav

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 5 c5 Nbd7 6 Bf4 Nh5 7 Bg5!? (Diagram 1)

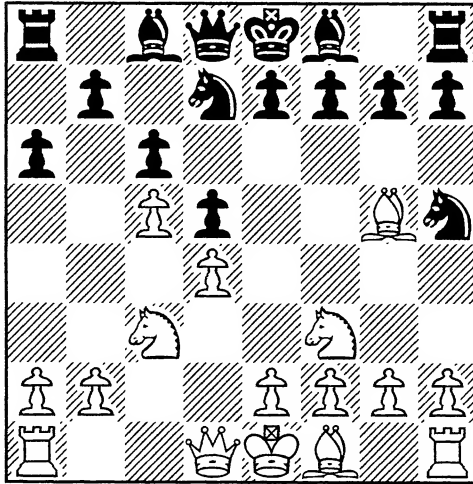


Diagram 1 (B)

The ...a6 Slav has continued to gain support in recent years and indeed it is so popular these days that many are even referring to it as the 'Modern Slav'. The sly pawn advance 4...a6 has undoubtedly been the bane of many a Queen's Gambit

player's life and I myself have tried pretty much every system available to combat it.

On the eve of a recent 4NCL match, John Emms mentioned to me that when on England duty fellow Grandmaster Nick Pert had suffered painfully after the sequence 5 c5 Nbd7 6 Bf4 Nh5 7 Bg5!? (thanks for that John!). Consequently I took a look at it and was very impressed with what I found.

□ **C.Ward** ■ **A.Hagesaether**

British League 2007

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 5 c5 Nbd7

Of course if you consult a big database you will find many old games with the likes of 5...Bf5, but Black doesn't really have time for such luxuries if he is to prevent White from dominating the h2-b8 diagonal, as we will see below. Note, though, that Black is actually now threatening 6...e5 as after 7 dxe5 Ng4 he will be attacking both c5 and e5 twice.

6 Bf4 Nh5

Had White found time to insert h2-h3 then Black's last move would be futile as the bishop could retreat to the safety of h2. However, White hasn't yet found time and now if the dark-squared bishop remains on the h2-b8 diagonal, a black knight is willing and able to swap it off.

7 Bg5!?

Amusingly 7 Bd2 Nhf6 8 Bf4 Nh5 9 Bd2 has appeared on several occasions with, of course, a draw by repetition. Perhaps that will be in a future book of not very dangerous weapons!

You will soon discover why I consider the dinky sequence that follows to be far stronger than the immediate 7 Be5. Although 7 Bg5!? is not new, I feel that it has been seriously underrated. Black players will continue to do so at their peril!

7...h6 8 Bd2 Nhf6 (Diagram 2)

Although this is sort of admitting to the fact that White can take a draw if he wants one, it is of course logical to want to retrieve the knight from the edge. My opponent played this with very little thought and he was actually treading the path of many such automatons before him. As I feel that the inclusion of ...h6 makes a significant difference, I actually believe that the text is arguably a mistake. Of course, it therefore follows that Black's alternatives need to be considered, as I will do in the 'Looking a Little Deeper' section, below.

9 Bf4

The bishop returns, but I had no intention of repeating the position.

9...Nh5 10 Be5 Nxe5

Only Fritz could come up with 10...f6 11 Qc2 Kf7 as its main variation! Humans are far more likely to take the view that the bishop has to go and that exchanging a pair of minor pieces will ease Black's cramp.

11 Nxe5 (Diagram 3)

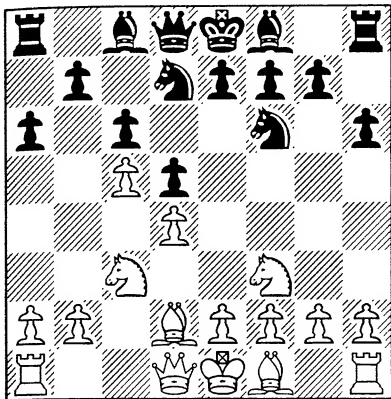


Diagram 2 (W)

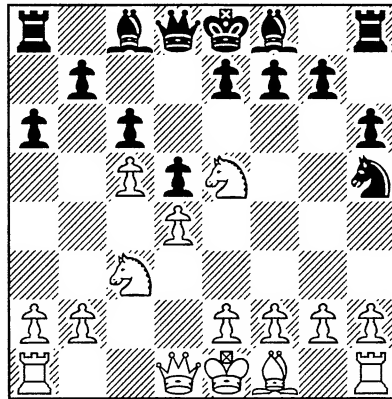


Diagram 3 (B)

This position has been reached much more often with the black h-pawn at home on h7 and I believe that the pawn being on h6 makes a significant difference. Officially the e5-square isn't an outpost, but bearing in mind the gaping hole that would be created on g6, challenging the superbly placed knight with an acceptable ...f6 is extremely difficult to arrange.

11...Nf6

With that in mind the offside and potentially vulnerable knight is recalled straight away, possibly to be required to make a challenge with ...Nd7.

12 e3

I opted to keep things simple for the time being although I must confess to being tempted by 12 e4!? e6 (as in our main game, 12...Nxe4 13 Nxe4 dxe4 14 Bc4 e6 15 0-0 Be7 16 Re1 would see Black's light-squared bishop destined to suffer) 13 exd5 exd5 14 Bd3 Be7 15 0-0 Nd7 16 f4 (**Diagram 4**), which saw White go on to win in V.Mikhalevski-V.Belov, Manila 2006, as I had briefly studied the night before.

12...Qc7

One of my expectations was 12...e6 13 Bd3 when 13...Qc7 and a direct transposition to the game is as good as anything else. My plan remains pretty much the same in any case, such as with 12...Bf5 13 Bd3 Bxd3 14 Qxd3 e6 15 0-0 Be7 16 f4, which leaves White with an obvious plan of attacking on the kingside and Black with very few options for counterplay.

Dangerous Weapons: The Queen's Gambit

13 Bd3 e6

At least Black's sneaky move order brought the cheap tactic 14...Bxc5 into play, but in all fairness I had that one under control!

14 f4 Be7

Satisfied by the like of 14...b6 15 cxb6 Qxb6 16 0-0, I was constantly monitoring Black's options to try and break out.

15 0-0 0-0 16 Rc1 (Diagram 5)

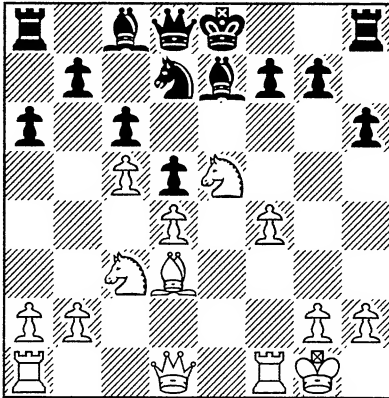


Diagram 4 (B)

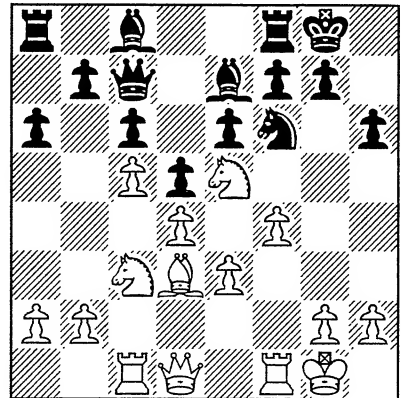


Diagram 5 (B)

From here I felt the rook could transfer to the kingside via c2 and the short-term purpose was to prevent ...b6.

16...Nd7

With reference to my last comment, 16...b6? 17 cxb6 Qxb6 18 Na4 would see the c6-pawn drop off.

17 Qh5

I considered each of 17 Qg4, 17 Qf3 and 17 Rf3 as well, but I'm not unhappy with the way I played.

17...f5

17...Nxe5 18 fxe5 is very worrying for Black's king, which can expect to see Rf3 followed by either a build up of pressure down the f-file or a switch along the third rank. Black would feel a lot happier taking on e5 if he had a pawn on f5, and that is obviously the motivation behind the text.

18 Ng6

I, on the other hand, favoured keeping the pieces on for now and the knight is equally a menace here.

18...Rf7 19 Rc2

Preparing to either build up against Black's c-pawn if he attempts ...b6 or to swing along the second rank to assist in an attack.

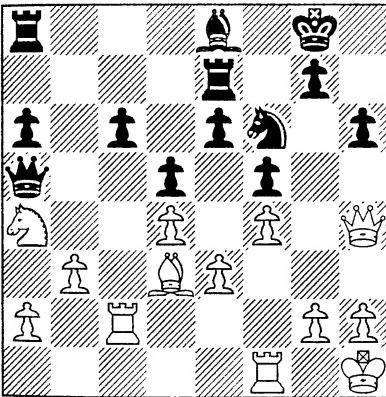
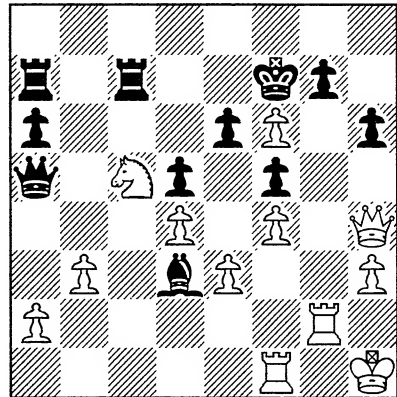
19...Nf6 20 Qh3 Bd7 21 Kh1

DANGEROUS WEAPON! While keeping control of the position elsewhere, my main plan revolved around breaking with g2-g4 and beginning an attack in earnest against the black king.

Rather than sit back and wait for all that to happen, Hagesaether tries to lash out, but his progress is minimal.

21...b6 22 cxb6 Qxb6 23 Na4 Qa5 24 Nxe7+ Rxe7 25 b3

Due to the bind on c5, Black is stuck with his bad bishop and there are no enemy weak points for him to attack.

25...Be8 26 Qh4! (Diagram 6)**Diagram 6 (B)****Diagram 7 (B)**

Pinning the black knight and paving the way to bring my kingside ambitions to fruition.

26...Raa7 27 h3 Kf7

I must admit that I was somewhat bemused by this, but while I had no constructive suggestions for Black (not that I would have offered them!), to his credit at least my opponent was gearing up for one last attempt at action.

28 g4 c5

And this is it! Finally Black injects some life into his bishop, although I'm afraid it

turns out to be a case of too little, too late.

29 Nxc5 Bb5 30 g5 Rec7

Another shock, but of course Black is now quite desperate.

31 gxf6 Bxd3 32 Rg2! (Diagram 7)

Not the only way to win, but a pretty one!

32...Be4

I had calculated 32...Bxf1 33 Rxc7+ Ke8 (or 33...Kf8 34 Nxe6+ Ke8 35 Qh5+ Rf7 36 Rg8+ Kd7 37 Qxf7+) 34 Qh5+ Kd8 35 Nxe6+ Kc8 36 Qe8+ Kb7 37 Rxc7+, as evidently had my opponent. Neither, though, was 32...Rxc5 33 Rxc7+ Ke8 34 Qxh6 Be4+ 35 Kg1 appealing for Black.

33 Nxe4 1-0

Looking a Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 5 c5 Nbd7

Before we get down to work on Black's main option, I should mention that I had in fact played 5 c5 against Julian Hodgson ten years ago when he actually responded with 5...Bf5. I was also aware when preparing for Hagesaether that both 5...Bg4 and 5...g6 were possibilities, and my first task was try and understand why in recent times 5...Nbd7 has been overwhelmingly Black's most popular response.

Through such sources as co-author Glenn Flear's work on the ...a6 Slav I encountered such variations as:

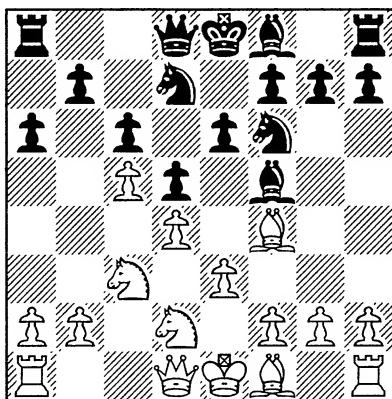


Diagram 8 (B)

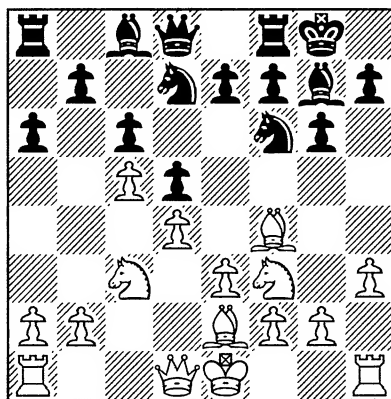


Diagram 9 (B)

a) 5...Bf5 6 Bf4 Nbd7 7 e3 e6 (instead 7...Nh5 compares unfavourably with our main line because after 8 Be5 Nxe5 9 Nxe5 Nf6 White can get his kingside expan-

sion going with tempo: i.e. 10 g4!? Be6 11 f4) 8 Nd2! (**Diagram 8**), preventing Black from invading on e4 and avoiding any ...Nh5 ideas. Furthermore, White is well set to expand on either the queenside or the kingside, such as with 8...Be7 9 Be2 Qc8 10 g4 Bg6 11 g5 Ng8 12 h4.

b) 5...g6 6 Bf4 Bg7 (6...Nh5 7 Be5 f6 8 Bg3 Bg7 9 e4 leaves Black's kingside looking silly) 7 h3 0-0 8 e3 Nbd7 9 Be2 (**Diagram 9**), and plenty of other similar variations, which all seemed to contain a consistent theme. When White plays 5 c5, he is intercepting Black's plan of challenging with ...b5. It is a space-gaining advance, but although White seemingly grasps the b6-square, making Black's ...a6 look pointless, there is always a danger involved in relieving tension in the centre so soon. Indeed, Black can try to break free with either ...b6 or, better still, ...e5, but the question is: can he satisfactorily arrange such a break?

I have basically concluded that the significant shift towards 5...Nbd7 suggests that Black cannot satisfactorily arrange ...e5 or ...b6, and I believe the last two diagrams are representative of why. If White can comfortably settle his bishop on the h2-b8 diagonal, then Black will struggle to get enough pieces covering the e5-square to arrange the ...e5 break. Furthermore, although ...b6 is more attainable, leaving aside the weakening repercussions that this might have on Black's queenside pawn structure, seeing how Black's rook is deprived of access to the b8-square, opening the b-file might not be that desirable either.

Now we should return to the modern preference, 5...Nbd7:

6 Bf4 Nh5 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bd2 (Diagram 10)

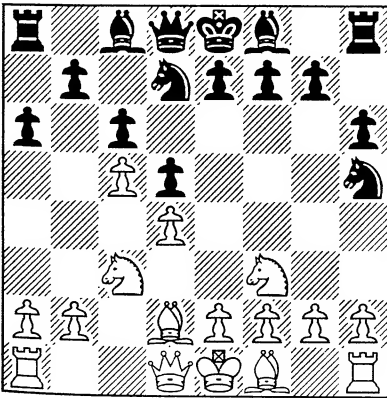


Diagram 10 (B)

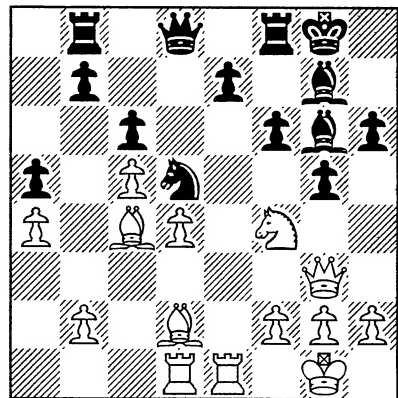


Diagram 11 (B)

Our introductory game provided coverage of 8...Nhf6, which many a black player has automatically and I believe erroneously bashed out. We will now consider the alternatives:

A: 8...g6

B: 8...e5

C: 8...Qc7!?

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 5 c5 Nbd7 6 Bf4 Nh5 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bd2 g6

Along with the other two alternatives to 8...Nhf6, this must constitute a winning attempt as it avoids the draw by repetition that admittedly White shouldn't be planning to take!

9 e4!

The obvious and surely best continuation. If Black doesn't take this pawn then he could easily get squashed.

9...dxe4 10 Nxe4 Bg7

A very worthwhile (and entertaining) reference is 10...Ndf6 11 Nxf6+ Nxf6 12 Bc4 Nd5 13 0-0 Bg7 14 Qb3 0-0 15 Rfe1 a5 16 a4 Rb8 17 Ne5 Bf5 18 Rad1 g5 19 Qg3 f6 20 Nd3 Bg6 21 Nf4! (**Diagram 11**) 21...Bf7 22 Ne6 Bxe6 23 Rxe6 f5 24 h4! Rf6 25 Qe5 Qe8 26 Rxe7! Qf8 27 Bxd5+ cxd5 28 Rxg7+ Kxg7 29 hxg5 hxg5 30 Bxg5 Re8 31 Bxf6+ Kg6 32 Bg7 and 1-0 in Y.Kuzubov-M.Serik, Dnipropetrovsk 2006.

11 Bc4 (Diagram 12)

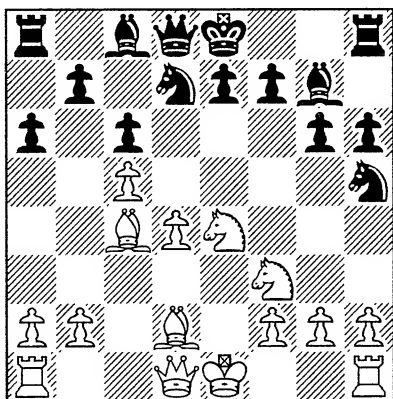


Diagram 12 (B)

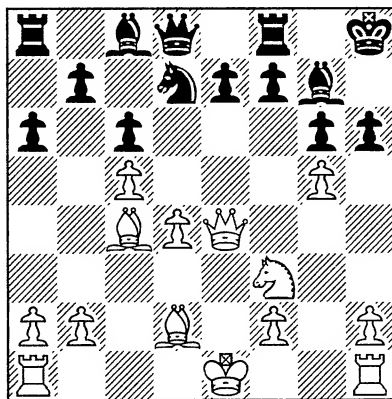


Diagram 13 (B)

11...0-0

Following the immediate 11...Nhf6, three possible routes for White to take are:

a) 12 Nxf6+ Nxf6 13 0-0 looks sensible, after which 13...Bg4?! is probably best met

by the straightforward 14 Qb3!, rather than the tempting tactic 14 Bxf7+ Kxf7 15 Ne5+ Kg8 16 Nxc4.

b) 12 Qb3 0-0 (12...Nxe4? 13 Bxf7+ Kf8 14 Bxc6 is fatal) 13 Nxf6+ Nxf6 14 0-0 Nd5 15 Rfe1 transposes to the aforementioned Kuzubov game and tenders a small but lasting advantage.

c) 12 Nc3 0-0 13 0-0 left the d7-knight a little misplaced in D.Bocharov-V.Burmakin, Togliatti 2003.

12 Qc2!

Utilizing the fact that the bishop on c4 is quite a monster.

12...Kh8

Unpinning the f7-pawn and refusing to fall for 12...Nh6? 13 Nxf6+ Nxf6 14 Qxc6.

13 g4!?

This aggressive lunge is very appealing to the attack-minded.

13...Nh6 14 g5 Nxe4

After 14...hxg5 15 Nexg5 e6 16 0-0-0, Black remains passive while ideas such as Ne5 and h4 are going to be hard to counter.

15 Qxe4 (Diagram 13)

The white queen rules the roost and I think the conclusion of E.Solozhenkhin-M.Karttunen, Helsinki 2000, demonstrates White's superiority: 15...f5 16 Qe2 e5 17 gxc6 Bf6 18 dxe5 Re8 19 0-0-0 Qc7 20 Bc3 Kh7 21 Rd6 b5 22 Bf7 Re7 23 Qd2 Nxe5 24 Nxe5 Bxe5 25 Bxc6+ 1-0.

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 5 c5 Nbd7 6 Bf4 Nh5 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bd2 e5

A nice idea in theory, but in practice I'm afraid (at least from Black's point of view!) that it falls a little short.

9 Nxe5! Nxe5 10 dxe5 Bxc5

The complications that Black now enters are certainly ambitious and perhaps he should settle for 10...Qe7!? 11 Na4 Qxe5 12 Bc3 Qe4 13 Nb6 (13 e3 Nf6 14 Qb3 Be7 15 Nb6 Rb8 16 Nxc8 Rxc8 17 Qxb7 saw White successfully grab a pawn in G.Siegel-G.Seul, Biel 1994, but 13...Nf4!? would be more testing) 13...Rb8 14 Nxc8 Rxc8 and hope to gradually neutralize White's bishop-pair.

11 e4 (Diagram 14)

White highlights the offside knight as a weakness, although Black is actually hoping that it will be a strength!

11...g6

The adventurous 11...Qh4 12 g3 Bxf2+ 13 Kxf2 Nxc3 14 hxg3 Qxh1 15 exd5 Qh2+ 16 Bg2 Bh3 17 Qh1 simply leads to a position where the two minor pieces are better than a rook and a pawn.

12 exd5 cxd5

Again 12...Qh4 looks doomed to failure: for example, 13 g3 Qd4 14 Qe2 cxd5 15 Rd1 and for all his efforts Black only has a poor knight, an isolated pawn and a vulnerably-placed queen!

13 Be2 Ng7 14 0-0 (Diagram 15)

And White's superior structure ultimately saw him triumph in P.Eljanov-V.Belov, online blitz 2003.

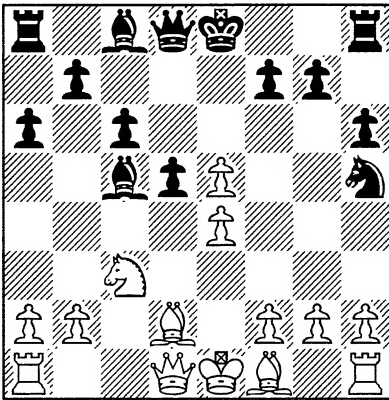


Diagram 14 (B)

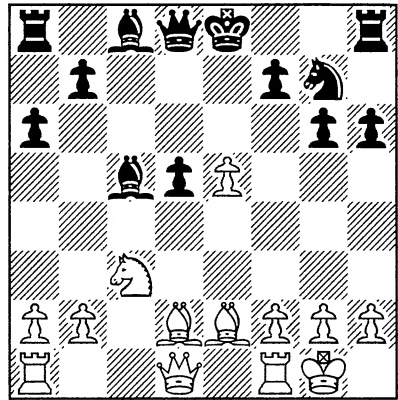


Diagram 15 (B)

C) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 5 c5 Nbd7 6 Bf4 Nh5 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bd2 Qc7!?
(Diagram 16)

Staking a claim to the h2-b8 diagonal and threatening 9...e5.

9 e4 dxe4

Attempting to muddy the waters with 9...e5? is doomed to immediate failure in view of 10 exd5 exd4 11 d6. Indeed, the central exchange is forced with 9...Nhf6? 10 e5 Ne4 11 e6! fxe6 12 Nxe4 dxe4 13 Nh4 being especially embarrassing.

10 Nxe4 Ndf6 11 Nxf6+

I would be lying if I said that my decision to denote 8...Qc7 as interesting wasn't influenced by the fact that it was Kasparov's choice when he reached this position again the talented Indian GM Sasikiran. That game continued 11 Nc3 Be6 12 Ne5 g6 13 Qf3 Rd8 14 Be3 Ng7 when arguably the greatest-ever player had solved his kingside piece pile-up in a rather unique way. Although one couldn't imagine the ex-World Champion grovelling in the same way that Black did in the introductory game, I wouldn't be surprised if White could prove some advantage. However, I have an entirely different idea in mind!

11...Nxf6 (Diagram 17)

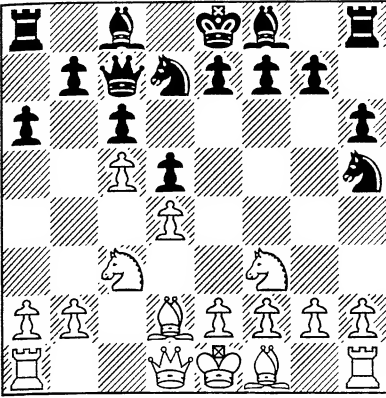


Diagram 16 (W)

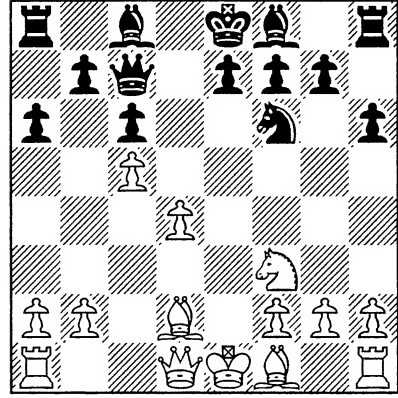


Diagram 17 (W)

While a not unreasonable structure, allied to a certain blockading ability, forms the basis of a solid position for Black, I believe that if White continues actively he should preserve at the very least what GM Mark Hebden would refer to as a 'nibble'. In fact, I have come up with two very interesting ways for White to push for that significant edge:

C1: 12 Ne5

C2: 12 Bc4

C1) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 5 c5 Nbd7 6 Bf4 Nh5 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bd2 Qc7 9 e4 dxe4 10 Nxe4 Ndf6 11 Nxf6+ Nxf6 12 Ne5

Not that I would say that it was a threat, but this aggressive knight thrust certainly puts paid to any ...Bg4 plans that Black may have had.

12...Be6

The obvious motivation behind this is to prevent 13 Bc4. Of course 12...Bf5 would transpose to Line C2 after 13 Bc4 e6, but while I am less than impressed with 13 g4?! Be4 14 f3 Bd5, of independent value is 13 Qa4!? e6 14 Ba5 Qc8. White should not forget that there is a weakness on b6 (in particular due to Black's inability to play ...b6 because his a-pawn hasn't been at home for some time!), which he could slowly aim to exploit. Black's position is solid, but it remains cramped.

13 Bd3 Rd8

An alternative reaction is to try to budge the white knight from its great post, but 13...Nd7 14 0-0 Nxe5 15 Bf4! Qd7 (definitely not 15...f6?, among other reasons, be-

Dangerous Weapons: The Queen's Gambit

cause of 16 Bg6+ Bf7 17 Bxf7+ Kxf7 18 dxe5 fxe5 19 Qb3+ e6 20 Rfe1!) 16 Bxe5 Bd5 as in J.Kociscak-M.Smistik, Havlickuv Brod 2006, saw White's dark-squared bishop take over that mantle and fulfil a similarly inhibiting role.

14 Qa4! (Diagram 18)

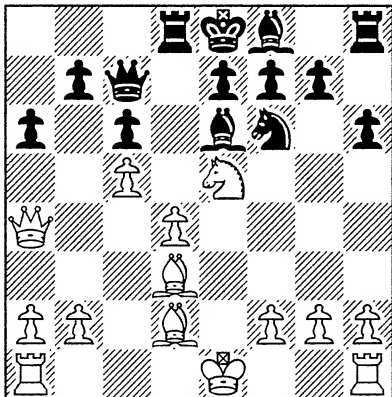


Diagram 18 (B)

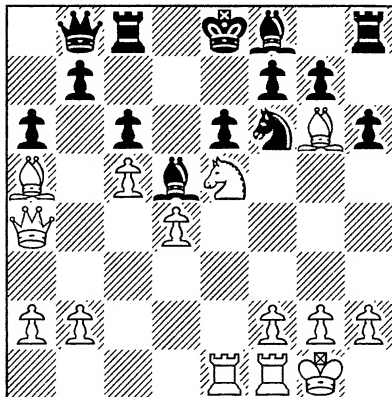


Diagram 19 (B)

Seen not for the first time, this is a key idea. Now Ba5 is facilitated, depriving Black of yet more squares.

14...Rc8 15 0-0 Bd5 16 Ba5 Qb8 17 Rae1

This rook is preferred just in case White wants to involve his f-pawn in the action.

17...e6 18 Bg6!! (Diagram 19)



DANGEROUS WEAPON What a stunner! There is no way to guard f7 and so Black must accept the crushing sacrifice.

18...fxg6 19 Qc2!

And suddenly in E.Scarella-C.Juarez, Villa Martelli 2003, it was all over. Presumably Black didn't relish the prospect of 19...Rc7 (or the hopeless 19...Be4 20 Rxe4 Nxe4 21 Qxe4) 20 Qxg6+ Ke7 21 Qf7+ Kd8 22 Ng6! and so threw in the towel.

C2) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 5 c5 Nbd7 6 Bf4 Nh5 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bd2 Qc7 9 e4 dxe4 10 Nxe4 Ndf6 11 Nxf6+ Nxf6 12 Bc4 (Diagram 20) 12...Bf5

Upon 12...Bg4 (the move that Line C1 side-steps), my first observation to you is that 13 Bxf7+?? obviously will not work because the black queen is covering the e5-square. However, I believe that White has two ways to guarantee an edge:

a) 13 Qb3 e6 (or 13...0-0-0?! 14 Bxf7 Bxf3 15 Be6+ Kb8 16 Qxf3) 14 Ne5 and White has kept pieces on to compliment his space advantage.

b) 13 h3 Bxf3 14 Qxf3 e6 15 0-0 Be7 16 Bf4 Qd7 17 Rad1 0-0 18 Rfe1 Rfe8 19 Be5, which gave Black the d5-square but little else in one online game.

13 Ne5 e6 14 Qe2 Rd8 (Diagram 21)

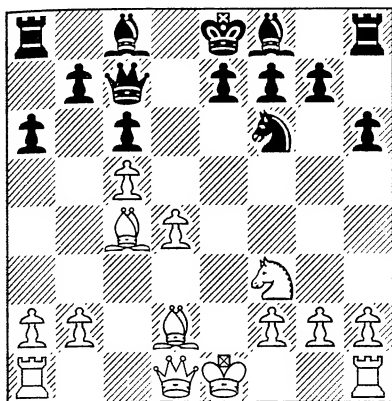


Diagram 20 (B)

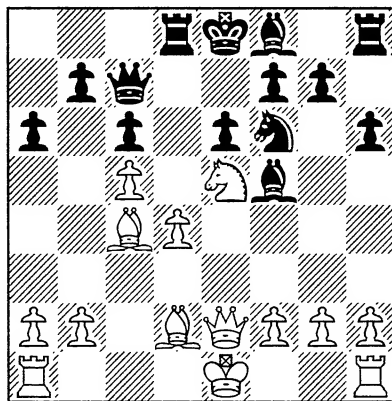


Diagram 21 (W)

The rather risky concept of castling queenside could hardly be more out of keeping with the style of this black defence.

15 Bc3 Be7 16 0-0 0-0 17 Rad1 Nd5

The obvious alternative to making the most of his big square is for Black to try and exchange off White's own knight. Following 17...Nd7, I've actually spent a bit of time investigating the intriguing situation after 18 g4 (the solid 18 f4 looks reasonable too) 18...Nxe5 (upon 18...Bh7 tempting is 19 Nxf7, but actually keeping things on the boil with 19 f4!? might be stronger) 19 dxe5 Rxd1 (or similarly 19...Bg6 20 Rd6!?) 20 Rxd1 Bg6 21 Qe3 Rd8 22 Rd6!? (**Diagram 22**), which is potentially quite dangerous as 22...Rb8 (22...Bxd6? 23 exd6 Qd7 24 Qe5 shows why the exchange is of little importance when the bishop-pair works so well) 23 f4 Bxd6 24 exd6 Qd8 25 d7! demonstrates: again White is aiming for 26 Qe5.

18 Rfe1 Nxc3

Arguably this is an inaccuracy, but while it is difficult to suggest a constructive plan for Black, in time White might withdraw his dark-squared bishop to help focus on Black's kingside. Note too that 18...f6?! 19 Nf3 leaves the e6-pawn a natural target and hence 20 Nh4 a serious threat.

19 bxc3 (Diagram 23)

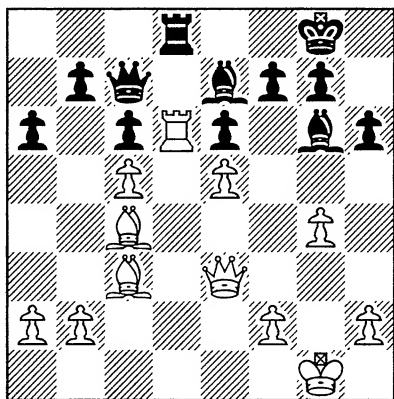


Diagram 22 (B)

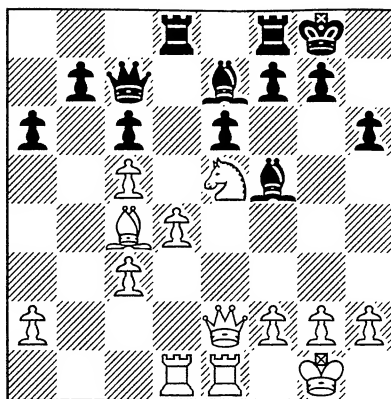


Diagram 23 (B)

Now a simple plan for White is to withdraw the bishop to d3. While that frees the c4-square for a white knight, of even more concern to Black would be the prospect of White swinging a rook up and along the third rank to aid in a potentially very dangerous kingside attack. Let's see, though, what might happen if Black tries to generate some play of his own: 19...b6?! 20 cxb6 Qxb6 21 g4! Bh7 22 Nxf7! Rxf7 23 Qxe6 Rdf8 24 Qxe7 and White bags a significant material advantage.

Conclusion

I really hope that you like this chapter as I have worked hard to come up with some fresh ideas, particularly in what I am assuming is the critical variation (Line C). The ironic situation, though, is that if you deploy this weapon my analysis of 12 Ne5 and 12 Bc4 may not even come into play! That's because the statistics show that black players seem to prefer blindly going down the inferior alley of our introductory game, with many yet to appreciate the difference that the detrimental inclusion of ...h6 makes.

In all fairness, this chapter doesn't quite constitute a complete repertoire against the ...a6 Slav, but following 5 c5 I can't exaggerate how much the trend has moved away from the likes of 5...g6, 5...Bf5 and 5...Bg4. Indeed, when I did a search of recent games, a whopping 25 out of 30 of them featured 5...Nbd7, after which, as we have seen, White can have lots of fun!

Chapter Three

Exciting Byways in the Main Line Slav: Part One

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 e6 7 f3
(Diagram 1)

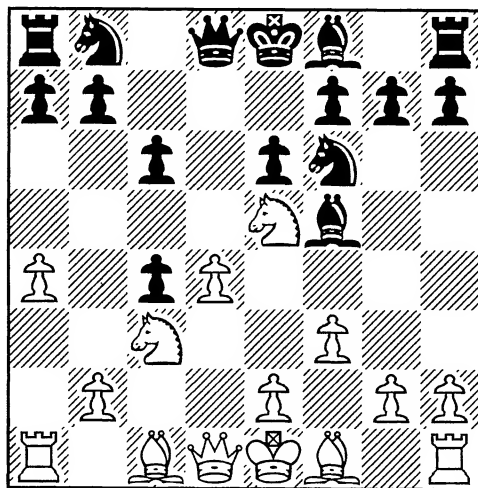


Diagram 1 (B)

6 Ne5 heralds a decision to tackle the Slav in the sharpest manner available, but doesn't it just lead to reams of theory? The complicated main lines may be fascinating, but they are, indeed, also pretty theoretical. However, there are a number

of far less-investigated byways which are no less complex, as well as being fun to play. One could even treat both this chapter, which is devoted to Black's options after 6...e6, and the next, which examines Black's alternatives to 6...e6, as a mini-repertoire for White against 5...Bf5, although I suspect that many players will simply add some lines to their existing repertoire, while retaining others.

One of Black's main defences runs 6...e6 7 f3 Bb4 8 e4 Bxe4 9 fxe4 Nxe4 10 Bd2 Qxd4 11 Nxe4 Qxe4+ 12 Qe2 Bxd2+ 13 Kxd2 Qd5+, giving him several pawns for the bishop in a rather unbalanced position. White, however, has excellent chances to stun Black by deviating early in that sequence.

□ R.Janssen ■ E.Oosterom

Bussum 2001

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 e6 7 f3 Bb4 (Diagram 2)

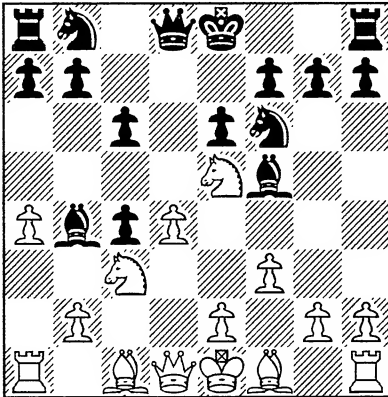


Diagram 2 (W)

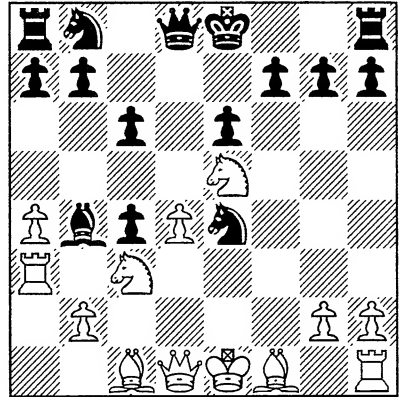


Diagram 3 (B)

8 e4

I will chiefly focus on 8 g4!? in the 'Looking a Little Deeper' section, below. Janssen, however, has an even more radical idea in mind.

8...Bxe4

The correct way to sacrifice, whereas 8...Nxe4? 9 fxe4 Qh4+ 10 Ke2 doesn't give Black enough for the piece: for example, 10...Bxe4 11 g3!? Qh5+ 12 g4 Bd3+ 13 Kf3 Qh4 14 Bxd3 cxd3 15 Kg2 Nd7 16 Nxd3 saw White consolidating with some advantage in A.Greenfeld-J.Granda Zuniga, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988, as did 10...Bxc3 11 bxc3 Bxe4 12 Be3 c5 13 Qe1 Qe7 14 Kf2 in Wang Lei-Le Kieu Thien, Istanbul Olympiad 2000.

g fxe4 Nxe4 10 Ra3!? (Diagram 3)



ROLL THE DICE! Rather than play with an extra piece against several pawns after 10 Bd2, White prefers to offer material himself and now Black must decide which rook to take!

10...Qh4+!?

Black wants the h1-rook. The stem game, V.Neverov-V.Moskalenko, Kiev 1986, saw instead 10...Bxa3 11 Nxe4 Bb4+ (a critical alternative is 11...Qh4+!? 12 Ng3 Bb4+ 13 Kf2 Nd7, which was unhelpfully agreed drawn here in O.Cvitan-L.Milov, Geneva 1995; play might continue 14 Nf3! Qe7 15 Bxc4 Nb6 16 Bd3 Nd5 17 Ne4 0-0 18 Qc2 f5 19 Nc3, when perhaps White is starting to get somewhere: what is notable is that he can attack no matter which side Black's king goes) 12 Kf2 Nd7 (after 12...Qh4+ White might transpose to our last variation with 13 Ng3 Nd7, and I also wonder about 13 Ke3!?: for example, 13...0-0? 14 Bxc4 leaves Black surprisingly badly co-ordinated and even 13...f5!? 14 Nc3 Nd7 15 Nxd7 Kxd7 16 Bxc4 Bd6 17 Kd3 may give White some pressure, against e6 and on the queenside in this case) 13 Bg5 Nf6 (and not, of course, 13...f6? 14 Qh5+) 14 Nxf6+ gxf6 15 Bh4 Be7 (Diagram 4), with a rather unbalanced situation. I personally prefer White since he will find it easier to attack Black's king with his two extra minor pieces, than Black will to get at White's with his extra rook and three pawns.

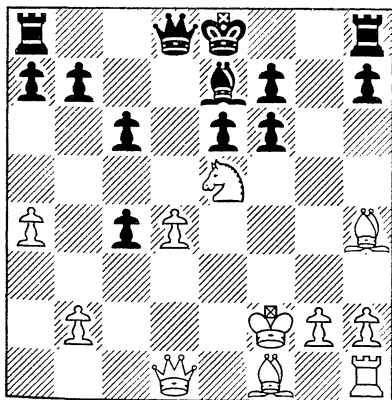


Diagram 4 (W)

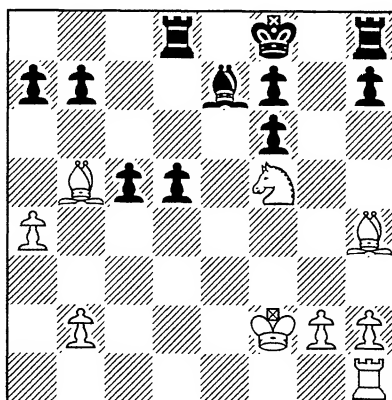


Diagram 5 (B)



BEWARE! However, White must not get carried away: 16 Nxf7? Kxf7 17 Bxc4 f5! 18 Bxe7 Qxe7 19 Qh5+ Kg7 20 Re1 Rhe8 21 Rxe6 Qd7 saw Neverov coming up short in the game.

As pointed out by Hübner, White shouldn't be in such a hurry and while he has

assessed 16 Nxc4 c5!? (ambitious; perhaps Black should prefer 16...Qd7, not that 17 Ne3 0-0-0 18 d5!? is such a bed of roses for him; wrenching open lines for White's pieces with Qd4 but one idea) 17 d5! Qxd5 18 Qxd5 exd5 19 Ne3 as being equal, I'd much rather take White: for example, 19...Rd8 20 Bb5+!? (White can also play more slowly and after 20 Nf5 Kf8 21 Be2 all his pieces will quickly put Black under some pressure) 20...Kf8 21 Nf5 (**Diagram 5**) 21...Rg8!? (a tricky tactical defence, albeit one which fails to equalize) 22 Nxe7! Rg4 23 Nf5 Rf4+ 24 Kg3 Rxf5 25 Bd3 Re5 26 Bxf6 Re3+ 27 Kf4 Rxd3 28 Bxd8 Rd2 29 Re1 and White's extra bishop should be more important than Black's extra pawns.

11 g3 Nxc3 12 hxg3 Qxh1 13 Qg4! (Diagram 6)

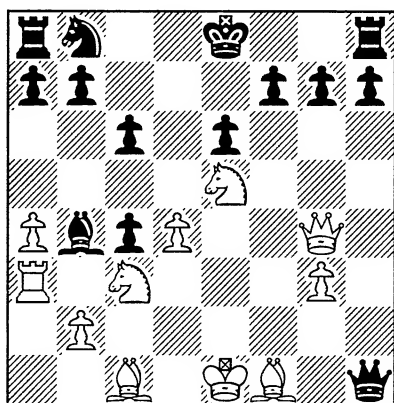


Diagram 6 (B)

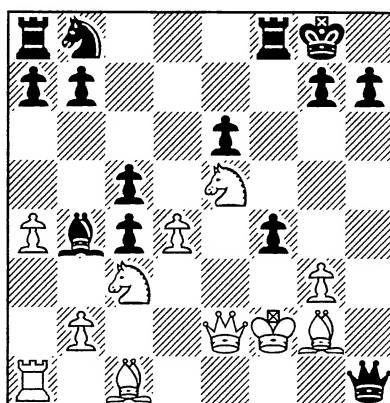


Diagram 7 (B)

Without this active follow-up, White would be struggling.

13...Na6

Declining the rook makes good practical sense and 13...Bxa3!? 14 Qxg7 Rf8 15 bxa3 Nd7 is most certainly very risky for Black. However, perhaps he might be able to somehow get away with this because after 16 Nxc4 (possibly 16 Kf2!? should be preferred, keeping the black queen's activity under some control, before looking to attack with all White's pieces after 17 Bf4) 16...0-0-0 17 Bf4 Qf3 I haven't been able to find more than a draw for White, largely because of Black's annoying ...e5 resource.

Another critical response which perspective white players would do well to examine is 13...0-0!?, after which 14 Ra1 c5?! (very tempting, but in view of the sharp play which follows, I suspect that this may well be inaccurate) 15 Kf2! (threatening to trap and win Black's queen after 16 Bg2) 15...f5 (probably best; Hübner points out that 15...cxd4?! 16 Bg2 Qh2 17 Nf3! f5 18 Qxd4 Qh5 19 Qxc4 gives White a handy initiative) 16 Qe2 f4 (Black also fails to equalize after 16...cxd4 17 Bg2 Qh2

18 Qxc4! – 18 Nf3 Qh5 19 Qxe6+ Qf7 20 Nxd4 Bc5 isn't so clear – 18...dxc3 19 bxc3 Nc6 20 Nxc6 bxc6 21 Bf4 in view of White strong bishops) 17 Bg2 (**Diagram 7**) 17...Qh6 (Black might try to keep White tied up on the back rank with 17...fxg3+? 18 Kxg3 Qg1, but this loses to the beautiful 19 Bh6!! Qxa1 20 Qg4 Qe1+ 21 Kh3 g6 22 Qxe6+ Kh8 23 Nf7+) 18 d5! (not only going forwards, but also usefully reducing Black's counterplay) 18...g5? (too risky; a better defence is another Hübner suggestion, namely 18...fxg3+ 19 Kxg3 Qf6, although now 20 Bd2!, while far from fully clear, appears to leave Black struggling, such as after 20...Qe7 21 Nxc4 Rf6 22 Be4 Nd7 23 d6 Qf7 24 Rh1) 19 gxf4 Qg7 was the fascinating course of E.Sapunov-M.Kobalija, Russian Championship, Samara 2000. Here Sapunov's 20 Bd2 wasn't so bad, but White can do much better with 20 dxe6! Bxc3 21 bxc3 Na6 22 Bd5 (Hübner), with a crushing position in which White's two extra minor pieces reign supreme.

That all seemed both enjoyable for White to play and quite promising for him, but Black can deviate after 13...0-0 14 Ra1 with Hübner's idea of 14...Qh2! (**Diagram 8**), preventing his queen from running into trouble after 15 Kf2 and Bg2. Black's main idea is revealed by 15 Bxc4 c5, after which 16 Bxe6? (neither is 16 d5 ideal after 16...Qg1+ 17 Ke2 Bxc3! 18 bxc3 Qg2+ 19 Ke1 exd5) doesn't even force a draw in view of 16...h5! 17 Bxf7+ Rxf7 18 Qc8+ Rf8 19 Qe6+ Kh7 20 Qg6+ Kh8 21 Nf7+ Rxf7 22 Qxf7 Nc6.

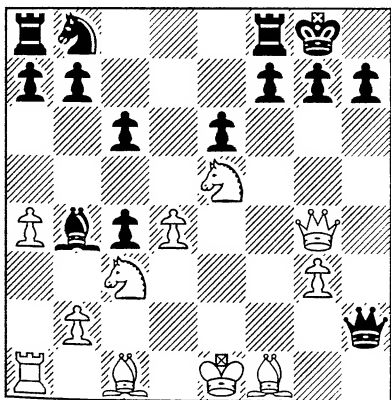


Diagram 8 (W)

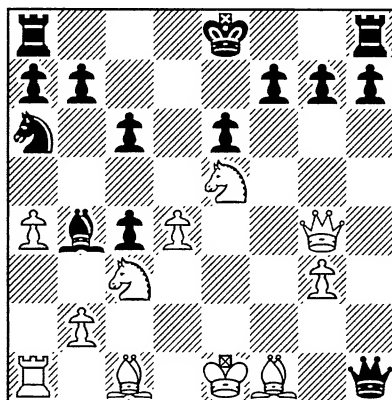


Diagram 9 (B)



ROLL THE DICE! I must admit that I haven't been able to find a particularly good approach for White after 14...Qh2, which is why 10 Ra3 can only be recommended to those happy to take something of a risk.

Perhaps 15 Qh4!? is the best White can do, which is, of course, far from ideal. After

15...Qxh4 16 gxh4 Rd8 17 Be3 Nd7 18 Nxd7 Rxd7 19 Bxc4, Black's rook and three pawns should slowly outclass White's two minor pieces, at least so long as Black can find a way to open the position which isn't so easy to do.

Returning to 13...Na6:

14 Ra1 (Diagram 9)

White should save his rook without delay since 14 Qxg7? 0-0-0 15 Ra1 Qe4+ 16 Kf Bxc3 17 bxc3 Qc2+ (Van de Mortel) leaves Black with the winning attack.

14...0-0

This position is absolutely fascinating and unclear. Another option for Black is 14...0-0-0!? when Janssen intended 15 Be3. That stabilizes the centre, but is unlikely to supply an objective advantage after 15...Nc7, with the point that 16 Nxf7? loses to the pinning 16...Rhf8.

15 Kf2 f5!?

Just like Kobalija, Oosterom can't refrain from this useful advance. Here he even harbours some hopes of punishing White with a counterattack.

16 Qe2 f4 17 Bxf4

In view of the notes to Black's 18th, attention should also be given to 17 gxf4!? and if 17...Be7, then 18 Qe4.

17...c5

Scherbakov points out that 17...g5?! would have been rebuffed by 18 Qg4 Rf5 19 Nf3! Raf8 20 Nxg5 Qh2+ 21 Ke3!, after which 21...Qxb2? loses to 22 Nxe6+, but 21...h5! isn't so bad for Black, although White can probably retain a pull with 22 Nf3+! hxg4 23 Nxh2 c5 24 Nb5 cxd4+ 25 Nxd4 Bc5 26 Bxc4.

18 Qg4 (Diagram 10)

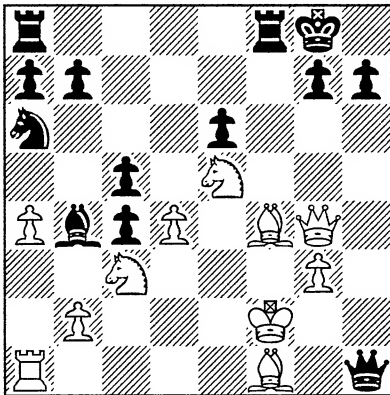


Diagram 10 (B)

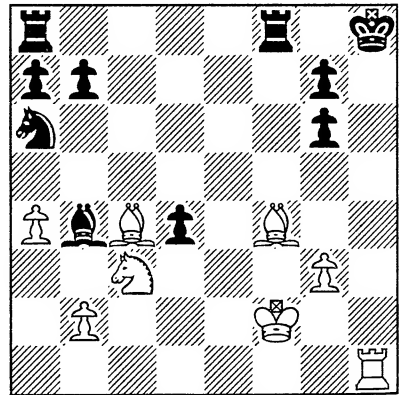
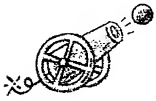


Diagram 11 (B)

18...cxd4??

Black had to prefer either Scherbakov's 18...Nc7 or Van de Mortel's 18...Rf6 19 Rd1 h5, with a most complex position in both cases.

Now the game continued 19 Bxc4 and White eventually won after many adventures and swings of fortune.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! However, the Dutch IM could have capped a most original display with the brilliant 19 Qxe6+ Kh8 20 Qg8+!! (Van de Mortel), leading to a beautiful mate after 20...Kxg8 21 Bxc4+ Kh8 (or 21...Rf7 22 Bxf7+ Kf8 23 Rxh1 with an extra piece and ongoing attack) 22 Ng6+! hxg6 23 Rxh1 mate (Diagram 11).

Looking a Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 e6

A quick reminder that Black's alternatives to this, especially 6...Nbd7, can be found in our next chapter.

7 f3

Now Black has two important options:

A: 7...c5

B: 7...Bb4

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 e6 7 f3 c5 8 e4 (Diagram 12)

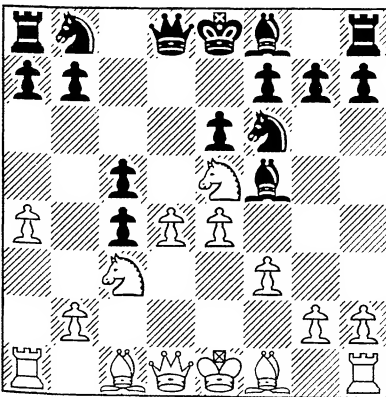


Diagram 12 (B)

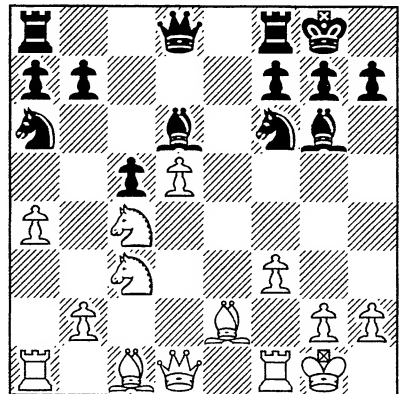


Diagram 13 (B)

8...cxd4

For a long time 8...Bg6 was considered insufficiently challenging, but it has gained some recent attention since its adoption by Kramnik:

a) White might be happy to take the small edge after 9 Be3 cxd4 10 Qxd4 Qxd4 11 Bxd4 Nfd7 12 Nxd7 Nxd7 13 Bxc4, hoping that his opponent doesn't have Kramnik's level of technique to hold this position.

b) More in keeping with our Dangerous Weapons ethos is 9 d5 exd5 10 exd5!? (10 Nxc6 hxc6 11 e5 looks tempting, but Black has plenty of counterplay after both 11...Nh5!? and 11...Nfd7 12 Qxd5 Nc6 13 e6 fxe6 14 Qxe6+ Qe7 15 Qxe7+ Bxe7 16 Bxc4 Nde5, which was fine for him in A.Shirov-B.Gelfand, Moscow 2006) 10...Bd6 11 Nxc4 0-0 12 Be2 Na6 13 0-0 (**Diagram 13**), reaching quite an unbalanced position. White's knight is well placed on c4 to support his passed d-pawn and, although Black is quite solid, White probably has an edge. Indeed, Kramnik's second was unable to hold after 13...Nb4 14 Bg5 h6 (or 14...Re8 15 Rc1 a6 16 Kh1 h6 17 Bxf6 Qxf6 18 Ne4 Bxe4 19 fxe4 Qe7 20 a5 and again Black's dark-square blockade ultimately proved insufficient in R.Kasimdzhanov-R.Ris, Kemer 2007) 15 Bxf6! Qxf6 16 Ne4 Bxe4 17 fxe4 Qe7 18 Bh5 Rad8 19 Qe2 in T.Radjabov-E.Bareev, Odessa (rapid) 2007.

9 exf5 Bb4

Interest in 9...Nc6 waned during the nineties, largely because 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 fxe6 fxe6 12 Bxc4 (remarkably the critical 12 Nb1!? has never been tested: after 12...d3 13 Nc3 Bc5 the position has clear similarities with the Hodgson-Smallbone Variation of Chapter 6, but White might wish to consider ways to untangle in this most unclear position) 12...dxc3 13 Qe2 gives White a pleasant pull with his two bishops.

Returning to the sharper 9...Bb4. Now some readers may be happy to debate the theoretical continuation 10 Bxc4 dxc3 11 Qxd8+ Kxd8 12 Ke2 cxb2 13 Bxb2 Ke7 14 Rhb1!, after which 14...a5! 15 Ba3 is currently a critical line. However, it's also possible to shock Black:

10 Be3!? (Diagram 14)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! White places another piece en prise, but Black can't take both of them. Furthermore, he is unlikely to be too familiar with the complexities of this position, which had passed by unnoticed until I recently raised it in *New in Chess Yearbook 84*.

10...dxc3

The critical choice, whereas 10...dxe3? 11 Qxd8+ Kxd8 12 Nxf7+ Ke7 13 Nxc8 Nc6 14 Bxc4 Rxc8 15 Bxe6 doesn't give Black enough for the exchange.

11 Qxd8+ Kxd8 12 0-0-0+ Ke7 13 bxc3 (Diagram 15)

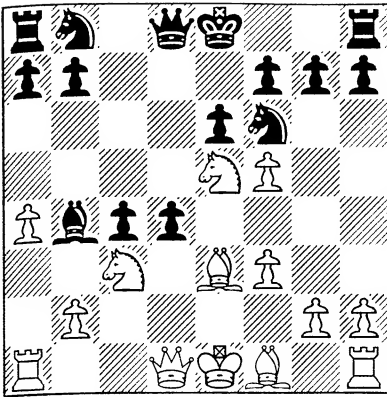


Diagram 14 (B)

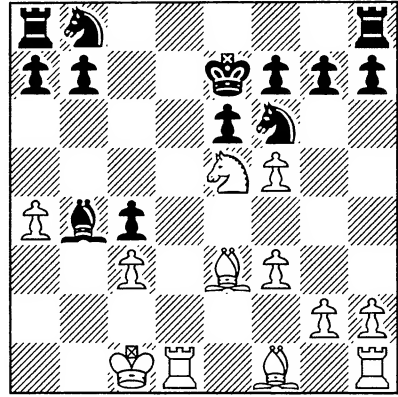


Diagram 15 (B)

13...Bxc3!

Probably best, although much more analysis and testing is required before we can reach a final verdict. Black also has:

a) 13...Ba3+? has been played in two of the three outings which White has given 10 Be3. However, it's not convincing: 14 Kc2 Nbd7 (or 14...Nd5 15 Bf2 Rc8 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 Bxc4 Nc6 18 Rhe1, with very strong central pressure in Zhao Xue-E.Paehetz, Bad Homburg 2007) 15 Nxd7 Nxd7 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 Bxc4 (White's bishop-pair is a useful asset, especially when one realizes that his king is also the safer) 17...Rhc8 18 Kb3 (**Diagram 16**)

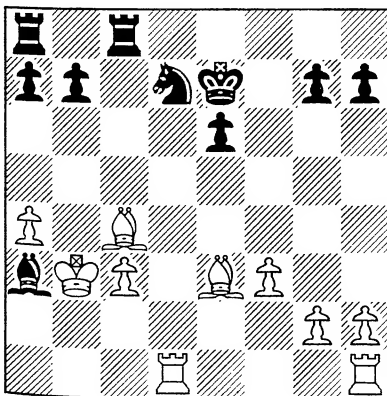


Diagram 16 (B)

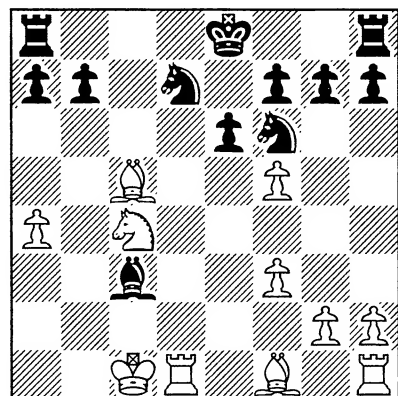


Diagram 17 (W)

18...Ne5 19 Be2 Bc5 20 Bg5+ Kf8 21 f4 Nf7 22 Rd7 left White clearly better in Bu Xiangzhi-S.Atalik, Ottawa 2007.

b) 13...Nd5!? is a more critical and sharper alternative. Does White, for instance, now have enough for the exchange after 14 Bg5+ f6 15 cxb4 fxb5 16 Bxc4!? (some-what more sensible is 16 fxe6 Ne3 17 Rd4, although Black is probably OK after 17...Na6!) 16...Ne3 17 Bxe6 Nxd1 18 Rxd1 Rd8 19 Rxd8 Kxd8 20 b5, playing against Black's undeveloped queenside?

14 Bc5+ Ke8 15 Nxc4 Nbd7 (Diagram 17)

A critical position. White's build-up along the a3-f8 diagonal looks threatening, but after 16 Ba3 a5! 17 Nd6+ (17 fxe6!? fxe6 18 Kb1 Bb4 19 Bb2 Ke7 20 g4 is one ambitious try to continue) 17...Ke7 18 Nc8+ Ke8 19 Nd6+ Ke7 20 fxe6 fxe6 21 Nf5+ Kf7 22 Nd6+ Ke7, he could find nothing better than to repeat in Bu Xiangzhi-K.Miton, Ottawa 2007.

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 e6 7 f3 Bb4 8 g4!? (Diagram 18)

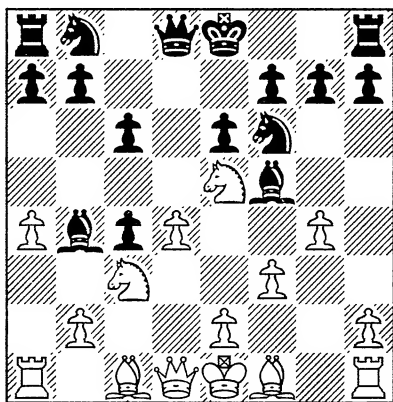


Diagram 18 (B)

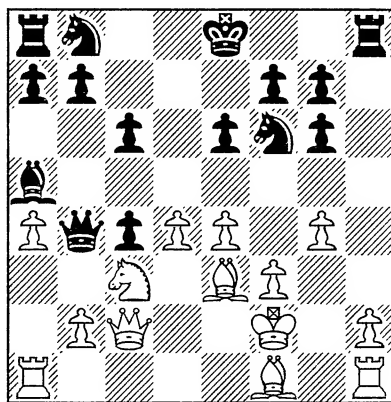


Diagram 19 (B)

Rare, interesting and a relatively safer way to avoid the main line than the speculative 8 e4 Bxe4 9 fxe4 Nxe4 10 Ra3!?, which we saw in Janssen-Oosterom.

8...Nd5

The critical response, but Black also has:

a) 8...Bg6 9 Nxb6 hxb6 10 e4 gives White decent play for his pawn after both 10...Qa5 11 Bd2 Qb6 12 Be3 Ba5 13 Qc2 Qb4 14 Kf2 (**Diagram 19**) and 10...b5 11 Be Nbd7 12 Kf2 a6 13 Qc2 (Tsesarsky).



ROLL THE DICE! I quite like White's compensation after an exchange on g6, but in the limited practice thus far White has preferred the even more ambitious 9 h4!? (Diagram 20).

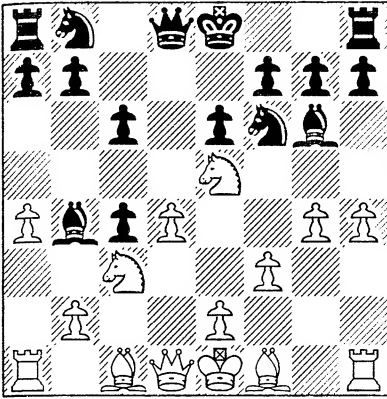


Diagram 20 (B)

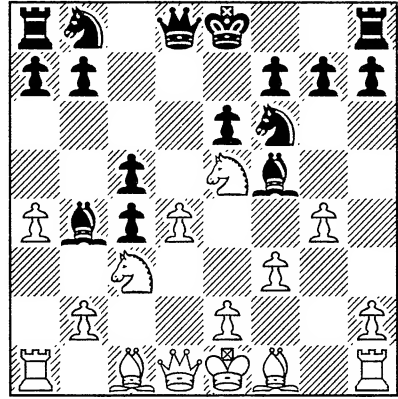


Diagram 21 (W)

Now:

a1) 9...h5 10 g5 Nd5 11 Bd2 Ne7 12 e3 c5 (having begun so solidly, Black doesn't have to give back the pawn just yet; instead Hübner suggests 12...Bd6!? with the point that 13 Nxg6 Bg3+ 14 Ke2 Nxg6 15 f4 Nxh4 is possible, but is this so bad for White after 16 Qc2 Nf5 17 Bh3 Nd6 18 Bg2 h4 19 Ne4? I'm far from certain that Black's dark-squared bishop and h-pawn will help his cause, rather than remain some distance from the main action) 13 dxc5 Nbc6 14 Nxg6 Nxg6 was quite unbalanced and unclear in Y.Kuzubov-D.Lintchevski, Kirishi 2005, and now I wonder about 15 Bxc4!? (Black appears less troubled by both the game's 15 f4 and 15 Ne4 Nge5! 16 Nd6+ Ke7 17 Bxb4 Nxb4) 15...Nge5 16 Qe2 Bxc5 17 Ne4 Be7 18 Bc3, retaining options on both flanks.

a2) 9...Nd5!? 10 Bd2 Be7! (and not 10...f6?! 11 Nxg6 hxg6 12 e4 Nxc3?! 13 bxc3 Bd6 14 Bxc4 e5 15 Qb3, which already left White well on his way to a crushing victory in S.Halkias-D.Svetushkin, Panormo (rapid) 2001) is critical, untested and somewhat problematic. Perhaps White should try 11 Kf2!?! (11 g5 Nd7 12 Nxc4 h6! gives Black good counterplay) 11...Bxh4+ 12 Kg2 Nd7 13 Nxc4, although whether he definitely has enough compensation here, even with 14 e4 next up, isn't so clear.

b) Hübner's suggestion of 8...c5!? (**Diagram 21**) 9 gxh5 (White might also play it safe with 9 e3, after which Hübner has indicated 9...Bd3, but perhaps White can claim a small pull after 10 Bxd3!? cxd3 11 Nxd3 cxd4 12 Nxb4 dxc3 13 Qxd8+ Kxd8 14 bxc3) 9...cxd4 (much more convincing than 9...Nd5?! 10 Kf2! Nxc3 11 bxc3 Bxc3

12 Bf4 Bxa1 13 Qxa1 cxd4 14 Nxc4 when White's extra minor pieces are the dominant feature of the position) is also quite critical, but is untested. This unclear position has certain similarities with the line 7...c5 8 e4 cxd4 9 exf5 Bb4, and here I feel that White should concentrate his research on both 10 Kf2 Qc7 11 Nxf7 Qxf7 12 Qxd4 exf5 13 e3 Nc6 14 Qxc4 and 10 Be3!? dxc3 11 Qxd8+ Kxd8 12 0-0-0+.

c) Black should be aware that he can't blindly sacrifice a piece in this variation and 8...Nxc4? 9 Nxc4 Bxc4 10 fxg4 Qh4+ 11 Kd2 Qxg4 12 e3 Qe4 13 Bxc4 wasn't too convincing in C.Derieux-P.Hauseux, Cannes 2007.

Returning to the main line, 8...Nd5:

9 Qd2 (Diagram 22)

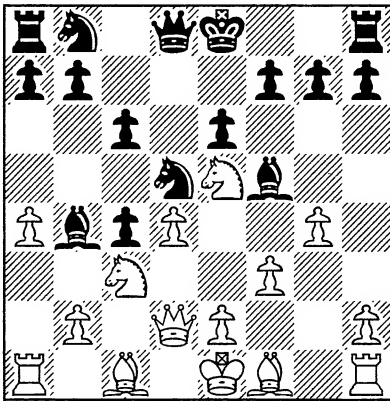


Diagram 22 (B)

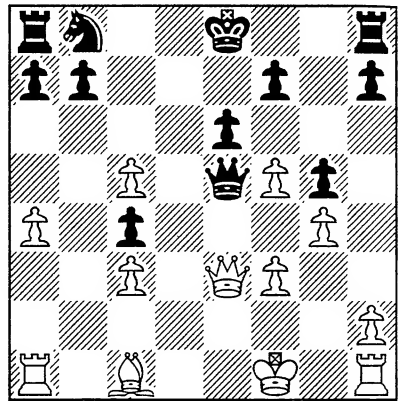


Diagram 23 (B)



BEWARE! This may be a little ugly, but now White is ready to drive Black backwards with 10 e4 and he must, of course, avoid 9 Bd2?? Qh4 mate!

9...Qh4+

Tempting, but just like in many King's Gambit positions, forcing White's king to move may not be so good. Black now loses valuable time and White's king is fairly safe in the centre. Perhaps Black should thus again look to his alternatives:

a) 9...c5!? 10 e4! Ne3! (an idea of Graham Burgess's, whereas 10...cxd4? 11 Qxd4 Nxc3 12 Qxd8+ Kxd8 13 Nxf7+! Ke7 14 Nxh8 Nxe4+ 15 Ke2 Bxc4 16 fxg4 Nc6 17 Bg2 saw White emerge material ahead in N.Diaz-A.Ferrara, Buenos Aires 2002) 11 dxc5 (probably best: Black seems to be OK after 11 Qxe3 cxd4 12 Qd2 Bg6 13 Bxc4 0-0 since 14 h4 can be met by 14...Qd6!) 11...Qh4+ (or 11...Qxd2+!? when the exchange sacrifice doesn't fully convince, but 12 Kxd2! Nxf1+ 13 Rxf1 Bg6 14 Nxc4 might give White something, especially after 14...Bxc5 15 Nb5!, because it will take

Black some time to get his light-squared bishop into play) 12 Ke2 Nxf1 13 Kxf1 Qf6 14 Qf4 Bxc3 15 bxc3 g5 16 Qe3 Qxe5 17 exf5 (**Diagram 23**) remains structurally complex, but I feel that White might be starting to get somewhere: g5 is loose and White will gain some pressure down the b-file.

b) 9...Bg6 is rather solid, but quite possibly a bit too solid: 10 e4 (or 10 h4 f6 11 Nxc6 hxg6 12 e4 Nb6?! 13 a5 Nc8 14 Bxc4, which was excellent for White in V.Petkov-O.Aziz Ortego, Galapagar 2005, but 10...c5!? may well improve, with the fiendish idea of 11 h5 Bd3!) 10...Nxc3 11 bxc3 Be7 12 Rb1 Bh4+ 13 Kd1 Nd7 14 Nxc4 Nb6 15 Ne5 (**Diagram 24**) gave White an edge, as his central control and options on both flanks outweighed the position of his centralized king in J.Sriram-D.Solak, Athens 2006.

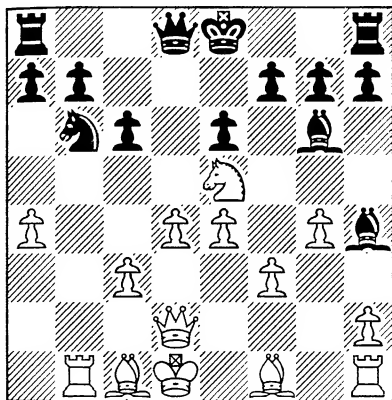


Diagram 24 (B)

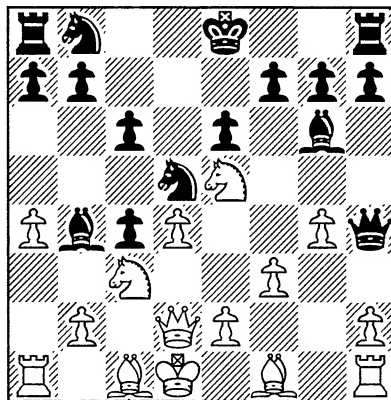


Diagram 25 (W)

c) 9...f6 10 Nxc4 Bg6 11 e4 Nc7 was similarly more pleasant for White in A.Gupta-J.Sriram, Indian Championship, Visakhapatnam 2006, and now I even wonder about the ambitious 12 h4!? h5 13 g5.

d) 9...Qa5?? blundered a piece in M.Masek-E.Voglova, Prague 2003: 10 Nxc4 Qd8 (or 10...Nxc3 11 Nxa5 Nd5 12 gxf5 exf5 13 Nxb7 Bxd2+ 14 Bxd2), and now there was nothing wrong with the simple 11 gxf5.

Returning to 9...Qh4+:

10 Kd1 Bg6 (Diagram 25)

The only move ventured thus far in practice. Once again, though, Black might prefer to delve into some interesting complications, this time with 10...f6!?. Burgess has then analysed 11 gxf5 fxe5 12 e4 Qh5!? (trying to improve over Tsesarsky's 12...exd4 13 Qxd4 0-0 14 Qxc4 Bxc3 15 bxc3 Qf2 16 Be2 which definitely favours White) 13 Qg2! (**Diagram 26**) 13...exd4 (White's fine last is underpinned by the

point that 13...Nxc3+ 14 bxc3 Bxc3 15 Kc2! Bxa1 16 Qxg7 Rf8 17 Qxb7 is actually risky for Black, not White: a factor which becomes more obvious after 17...Bxd4 18 Bxc4! (when we can see which king is actually the more exposed) 14 Na2 a5 (perhaps Black should prefer 14...Be7!?) 15 exd5 exd5 16 Qg4 Qf7, although I'd still rather take White) 15 exd5 exd5 16 Nxb4 axb4 and, like him, I'm not impressed by Black's swathe of pawns: 17 Rg1 looks like a good way to begin putting White's extra piece to some use.

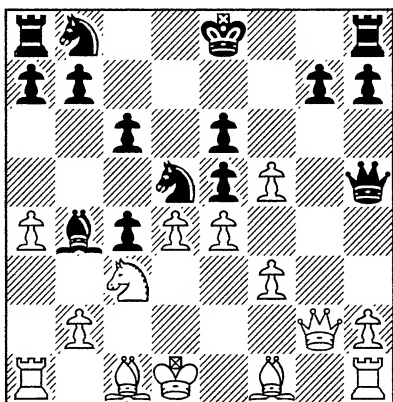


Diagram 26 (B)

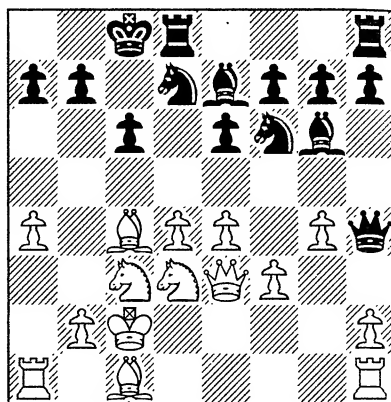


Diagram 27 (B)

11 e4!?

Retaining White's strong central knight and Black's somewhat-blunted bishop for the time being. This is probably a better try than 11 Nxg6 hxg6 12 e4 Nc7 13 Bxc4 Nd7 14 Qe2 0-0-0 15 Kc2, which is the simple route, relying on White's extra space and the bishop-pair for an advantage. However, matters aren't so clear if Black stirs up trouble in the centre, as he did in T.Kember-W.Woodhead: correspondence 1991: 15...f5!? 16 Bf4 e5 17 dxe5 fxe4 18 fxe4 Qe7 19 Rad1 Rdf8 20 Bg3 Nxe5 21 Bb3 and now 21...Na6! would have kept matters rather unclear.

11...Nf6

Instead 11...Ne7! was preferred in A.Rasmussen-P.Kaupala, correspondence 1978, and now rather than 12 Rg1! c5!, White should play à la Tsesarsky with 12 Bxc4 Nd7 13 Nd3.

12 Bxc4 Nbd7 13 Nd3!

Correctly keeping pieces on in a bid to make good use of White's spatial advantage.

13...Be7 14 Qe3 0-0-0 15 Kc2 (Diagram 27)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Tsesarsky's opening has most certainly been a success: he controls the centre, has seized some useful space on both flanks and his king is quite safe on c2. Black, on the other hand, lacks co-ordination and any real counterplay.

I.Tsesarsky-E.Postny, Israel 2000, continued 15...h5? (this doesn't help Black's pieces, especially his queen, but I'm far from certain that he can equalize in any case: for instance, Tsesarsky recommends 15...Nb6!?, with the idea of 16 Bb3 Nfd7 17 Bd2 Bd6 18 a5 Na8, but now 19 a6! b6 20 Be1 Qh3 21 Ne2 just looks rather promising for White to me) 16 g5 Ne8 17 Bd2 Nd6 18 Bb3 and White enjoyed some advantage.

Conclusion

I hope that this chapter has demonstrated that there are plenty of fascinating alternatives to the complex main lines for White to explore after 6 Ne5. The variation 6...e6 7 f3 c5 8 e4 cxd4 9 exf5 Bb4 is pretty sharp and far from fully explored, as shown by the fact that one critical move, 10 Be3!?, only made its debut in 2007! More theoretical is 7...Bb4, preparing a critical piece sacrifice, but White can try to steal much of Black's fun with 8 g4!?. I quite like this creative and radical approach and suspect that it will hold up much better to further testing than Janssen's 8 e4 Bxe4 9 fxe4 Nxe4 10 Ra3!?, which is fascinating but ultimately probably not fully sound.

Chapter Four

Exciting Byways in the Main Line Slav: Part Two

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxc4
(Diagram 1)

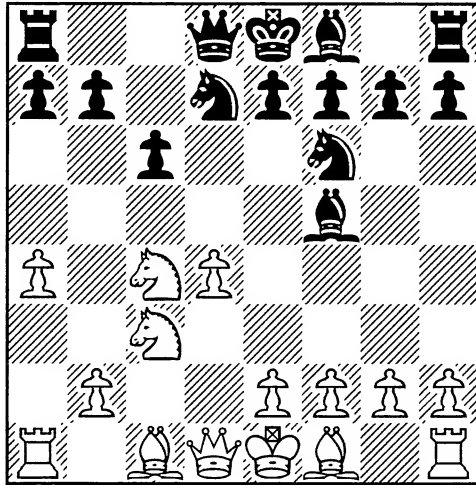


Diagram 1 (B)

It's now time to turn our attention to Black's alternatives to 6...e6. The most important of these by far is 6...Nbd7, which has received an injection of new ideas from Morozevich over the past decade. Black has various follow-ups after 7 Nxc4, but

one recurring theme which we will examine is that of trying to dissuade ...e5 with an early Bg5. That is especially promising in the following variation.

□ P.Wells ■ D.Fridman

Nuremberg 2006

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxc4 Nd5!?

This unexpected move, which came to prominence after Morozevich used it against Kramnik, almost deserves Dangerous Weapons status in its own right. Black is ready to meet both 8 f3 and 8 g3 with the counter-punch 8...e5!, but White doesn't have to get embroiled in those complications.

8 Bg5!? (Diagram 2)

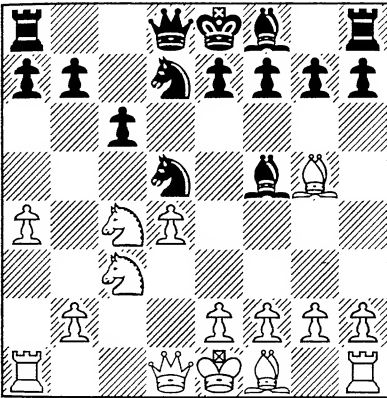


Diagram 2 (B)

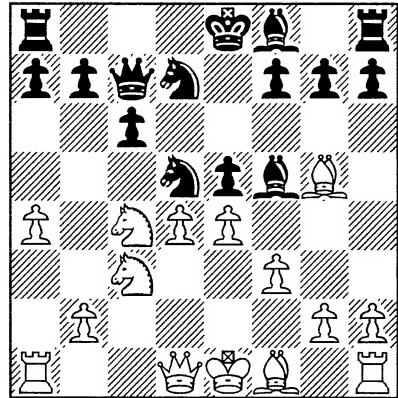


Diagram 3 (B)

First played by Mikhalevski, this might be rare (I've only been able to find five games with it), but it both prevents Black's intended 8...e5 and looks like a reasonable try for an edge.

8...N7b6

Black must, of course, prevent the threat of 9 Nd6+, but he can also do so with:

a) 8...Qc7!?! is the only other move tried thus far in practice, continuing to aim for ...e5. The stem game, V.Mikhalevski-V.Tukmakov, Biel 2001, continued 9 f3! (critical and promising, although White can also play more quietly with 9 e3 e5 10 Bd3 Bxd3 11 Qxd3 Bb4 12 0-0 0-0 13 Rac1, as he did in J.Ulko-V.Belov, Moscow 2001) 9...e5 (Mikhalevski points out that 9...b5?! 10 Nxd5!? cxd5 11 Ne3 is promising for White, due to the tactical point 11...f6 12 Nxd5 Qd6 13 e4! fxg5 14 axb5, regaining some material with advantage after 14...Bg6 15 Ra6 Qb8 16 Qc1 or gaining three

pawns and the initiative for the piece in the case of 14...e6 15 Ra6 Qb8 16 Nc3 Bg6 17 Rxe6+; also unconvincing for Black was 9...f6 10 Bh4 b5?! 11 Nxd5 cxd5 12 Ne3 e6 13 Nxf5 Bb4+ 14 Kf2 exf5 15 e3 Rc8, as in C.Ward-M.Devereaux, British League 2005, and now one rather promising path is 16 Bxb5) 10 e4 (**Diagram 3**) 10...Nxc3 (another important tactical point is 10...exd4? 11 exd5!, meeting 11...dxc3 with 12 Qe2+ and 11...f6 with 12 Qxd4 fxe5 13 d6) 11 bxc3 Bg6?! (Mikhalevski observes that 11...Be6 12 Be2 would restrict White to just an edge) 12 Be2 f6 (Black also failed to equalize after 12...exd4 13 cxd4 Bb4+ 14 Bd2 Bxd2+ 15 Qxd2 0-0 16 0-0 in J.Oms Pallise-M.Illescas Cordoba, Spanish Championship, Lorca 2005, and here 14 Kf2!? is also promising) 13 Bh4 b5 14 axb5 cxb5 15 Nd2! (**Diagram 4**), and in view of the point 15...Qxc3 16 Bxb5, with a strong initiative, White enjoyed the upper hand.

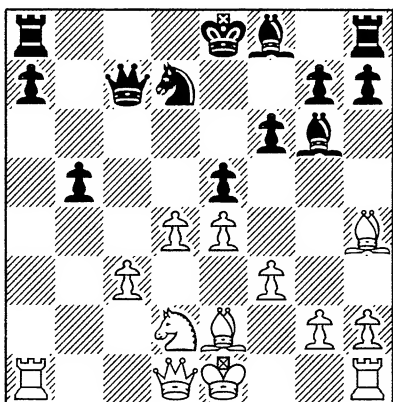


Diagram 4 (B)

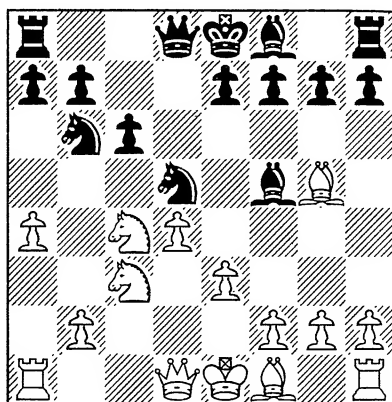


Diagram 5 (B)

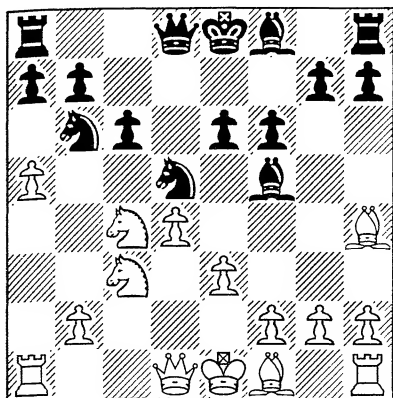
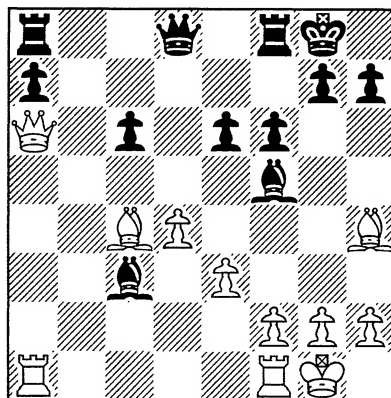
b) 8...f6 is a little ugly and might even be punished by Mikhalevski's idea of 9 e4!? (9 Bh4 N7b6 10 e3 transposes to our main game) 9...Nxc3 10 bxc3 Bxe4 11 Qe2 fxe5 12 Qxe4, with excellent positional compensation for the pawn.

c) 8...Nxc3 9 bxc3 Nb6 also feels like a small concession and after 10 Ne3!? (10 e3 Qd5! isn't so clear) 10...Bg6 11 Bf4 e6 12 Qb3 White's queenside pressure and extra central pawn should give him an edge.

Returning to the solid 8...Nd5:

9 e3 (Diagram 5) 9...f6

Black has also tried to do without this, but 9...Be6 10 Nd2! Nxc3 11 bxc3 Qd5 12 Bh4 Qa5 13 Qc2 leaves him with certain development issues and the further 13...h5?! 14 h3 Nd5 (or 14...g5 15 Bg3 Bg7 16 h4 and Black's king lacks a safe long-term home) 15 Rc1! b5?! 16 axb5 cxb5 17 Nb3 Qb6 18 Nc5 was most certainly excellent for White in J.Eriksson-R.Sagit, Swedish Championship, Gothenburg 2006.

10 Bh4 e6 11 a5! (Diagram 6)**Diagram 6 (B)****Diagram 7 (W)**

Refusing to let Black develop in peace and this is stronger than 11 Nd2 Nb4 12 Rc1 a5, with acceptable play for Black.

11...Bb4 12 Qb3 Nxc4 13 Bxc4 Bxa5

Critical, albeit far from forced. Instead 13...0-0 14 0-0 gives White ideas of both a5-a6 and e3-e4, and 14...Bxa5 15 e4!? (15 Qxb7 Qb6 16 Qa6 is a simpler course and one which retains an edge since 16...Bxc3? 17 bxc3 Nxc3 18 f3 leaves Black's knight somewhat offside) 15...Bxc3 16 exf5 Bxd4 17 fxe6 Re8 18 Rfe1 gives White decent play for his pawn.

14 Qxb7 0-0 15 Qa6!

Continuing to hassle and this is stronger than 15 0-0 Qb6 (Wells points out that 15...Nb4? fails to 16 e4! Rf7 17 Qxa8 Qxa8 18 Rxa5, with too much material for the queen) 16 Qa6, transposing to our last note.

15...Bb4 16 0-0 Nxc3 17 bxc3 Bxc3 (Diagram 7)

Temporarily winning a pawn, but White can always at the very least regain it on a7 or c6.

18 Ra3!

An instructive rook manoeuvre. Black now experiences certain problems down the b-file as his position begins to become quite unpleasant.

18...Bb4 19 Rb3 c5!?

A radical way of trying to break out. Unbalancing the position thus is risky, but there was no easy option for Black. Fridman might instead have sat tight with 19...Rb8, after which 20 Bg3! Rb6 21 Qxa7 Rf7 22 Qa2 Re7 gives White a pleasant

edge, but perhaps no more than that.

20 e4!?

Wells's power-play continues to impress. However, he later pointed out that the simpler 20 dxc5 Bxc5 21 e4 Bg6 22 Bxe6+ Bf7 23 Rb7 should also retain a pull, and, indeed, it does after 23...Qe8! (and not 23...Bxe6?! 24 Qxe6+ Kh8 due to 25 Qg4!) 24 Rxf7 Rxf7 25 Qc4 Bb6 26 Rd1.

20...Bg6!

One of White's ideas was that Black's queen would find herself rather offside in the event of 20...Qxd4? 21 exf5 Qxh4 22 f4!, after which White's passed e-pawn would have been a monster.

21 Bxe6+ Bf7 22 d5 (Diagram 8)

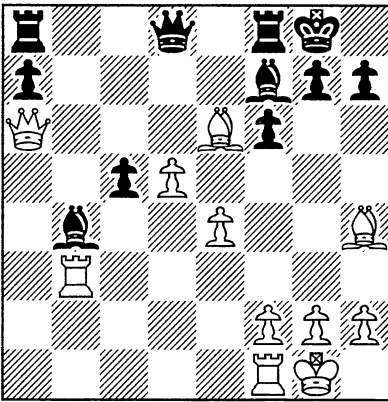


Diagram 8 (B)



Diagram 9 (W)

22...g5?!

Played in the same spirit as Black's 19th and not a bad practical try as time trouble began to raise its ugly head, but objectively 22...Qb6! should have been preferred. Wells explains that Fridman was concerned by 23 Bxf7+ Rxf7 24 Qxb6!? (by no means essential and, indeed, if White wants to attack, he should probably keep the queens on) 24...axb6 25 f4, which looks pretty dangerous, but 25...Ra4!? (25...Re8 is a simpler and also quite reasonable approach) 26 e5?! c4 27 Rxb4 Rxb4 28 e6 Ra7 29 d6 Kf8! calmly halts White's pawns.

23 Bg3 Qb6 24 Bxf7+ Rxf7 25 Qc4

Of course, White has no interest in trading queens: Black's king position is a grave cause for concern.

25...a5 (Diagram 9) 26 d6?!

Tempting, but now White loses much of his hard-won advantage. Correct was 26 Rf3! Qa6 27 Qc2 (Wells), when Black would have done well to survive with the e4-e5 push very much in the position.

26...Qa6 27 Qe6

Short of time, White settles for a draw. A lucky escape for Fridman! One can understand why White didn't want to risk 27 Qc2!?, but actually 27...a4 28 Rf3 a3 29 Ra1 c4 30 e5 Qc8 31 Qb1 (Wells) would still have given him a useful initiative.

27...Qc8 28 Qc4 Qa6 29 Qe6 Qc8 30 Qc4 ½-½

Looking a Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 Nbd7

As well as the 6...e6 of our last chapter, there are also a few minor alternatives:

a) It's worth knowing how to punish the rare 6...c5?!, which might just be confused with 6...e6 7 f3 c5 (Line A of our last chapter) by a club player inexperienced in the Slav. White should respond vigorously with 7 e4! (**Diagram 10**):

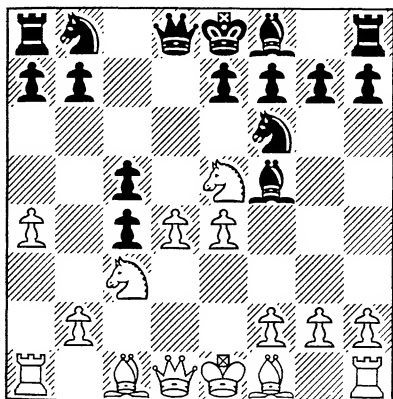


Diagram 10 (B)

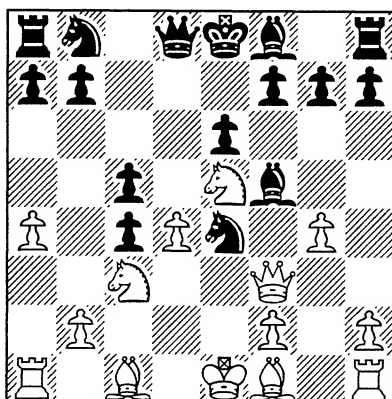


Diagram 11 (B)

a1) 7...Nxe4? 8 Qf3! is White's main point: 8...cxd4 9 Qxf5 Nd6 fails to Nadel's aesthetic 10 Bxc4! and 8...e6 should be met not by the common 9 Nxf7 (after which 9...Kxf7 10 g4 Nxc3 11 gxf5 Qd5 12 fxe6+, as in N.Kalinichenko-F.Landolfi, correspondence 1988, doesn't seem so clear to me after the bold 12...Kxe6! 13 Qg4+ Kf7 14 Bg2 Qxd4!, intending 15 Qf5+ Qf6 16 Qxf6+ Kxf6 17 Bxb7 Nc6 18 Bxa8 Nd4 19 Be3 Bd6, with a mess), but rather by Burgess's 9 g4! (**Diagram 11**) 9...Qxd4 (Black's compensation for the piece is rather unconvincing after 9...cxd4 10 Nxe4 Qa5+ 11 Kd1 Qxe5 12 gxf5) 10 gxf5 Nxc3 11 Nxf7!, which seems to bust Black after 11...Kxf7 12 fxe6+ Ke8 13 Be3 Qe5 14 Qf7+ Kd8 15 Qxb7.

a2) 7...Bxe4? 8 Bxc4 e6? (this loses material, but 8...Bg6 9 Qb3 e6 is hardly ideal for Black: White has a huge initiative and a choice of promising continuations, including 10 Qxb7 Nbd7 11 Nb5 Rc8 12 Nc6 Rxc6 13 Qxc6, which picked up the exchange in I.Kragelj-Z.Domany, Kecskemet 2005) 9 Nxe4 Nxe4 10 Qf3 (**Diagram 12**) 10...Qa5+ (White also wins after 10...Qxd4 11 Qxf7+ Kd8 12 Qxb7 Qxe5 13 Be3 Nd6 14 0-0-0 Ke8 15 Bb5+ Nxb5 16 axb5 and even 10...f5!? 11 Bxe6 Qa5+ 12 Kf1 Qa6+ 13 Bc4 is pretty horrendous for Black) 11 Ke2 Nd6 12 Bb5+ Kd8 13 Nxf7+ Nxf7 14 Qxf7 and 1-0 was the crushing conclusion of D.Garcia Ilundain-S.Niehaus, Groningen 1991.

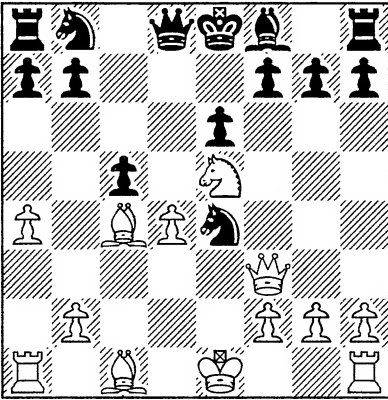


Diagram 12 (B)

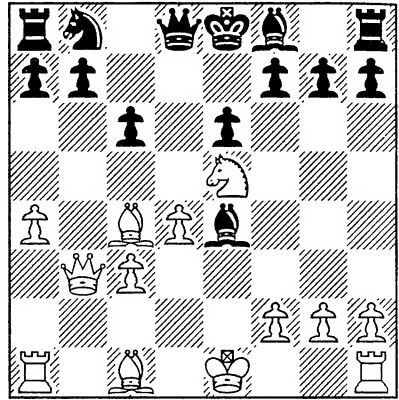


Diagram 13 (B)

a3) 7...Qxd4 8 Qxd4 cxd4 9 exf5 (Burgess's more materialistic suggestion of 9 Nb5!? also deserves attention: I find it hard to believe that Black has enough after 9...Nc6 10 Nc7+ Kd8 11 Nxa8 Nxe5 12 exf5) 9...dxc3 10 Bxc4 e6 11 fxe6 fxe6 12 Bxe6 Bb4 13 0-0 gave White the bishop-pair and a pleasant initiative in S.Fedder-A.Bang, Copenhagen 1991.

a4) The submissive 7...Bg6 might be best, as suggested by Graham Burgess in his authoritative *The Slav*. That said, with Cox's simple and strong 8 Nxg6! hxg6 9 d5, White gains a comfortable advantage and 9...e6?! 10 Bxc4 exd5 11 Bb5+! Nbd7 12 e5! Qe7? 13 0-0 Qxe5 14 Re1 Ne4 15 Rxe4! (1-0) was another disaster for Black in D.Milanovic-M.Zivkovic, Dimitrovgrad 2003.

b) 6...Nd5!? was once tried by Beliavsky. White might now take play back into Wells-Fridman with 7 Nxc4 Nd7 8 Bg5, but also tempting is Beliavsky's suggestion of 7 e4! Nxc3 8 Bxc4 (or 8 bxc3 Bxe4 9 Bxc4 when Black might transpose with 9...e6 and there's also 9...Bd5 10 Bxd5 Qxd5 11 0-0 Nd7 12 c4! Qe6 13 Qb3, not that this was exactly comfortable for Black in E.Lobron-A.Beliavsky, Munich 1994) 8...e6 9 bxc3 Bxe4 10 Qb3 (**Diagram 13**) and now 10...Qc8 (Burgess's attempt to

shore up Black's defences; instead Beliavsky only analysed 10...Nd7? 11 Nxf7! Kxf7 12 Bxe6+ Kf6 13 h4! h6 14 Bg5+ hxg5 15 hxg5+, leaving White with a strong, ongoing attack) 11 0-0 Bd6 12 Ba3! Bxe5 13 dxe5 Bd5 14 Qb4 c5! 15 Bb5+ Nd7 16 Bxd7+ Kxd7 17 Qf4 gave White promising play for his pawn in M.Jaworski-J.Kluegel, correspondence 1999.

c) 6...Na6 has received some attention in recent years, no doubt because black players have been attracted to the idea of 7 f3 Nd7 8 Nxc4 e5. White should probably avoid that, preferring one of:

c1) 7 e4!? is consistent with White's play against both 6...c5 and 6...Nd5, but has only been played once. The critical line runs 7...Nxe4 (7...Bxe4?! was preferred in N.Dobrev-M.Stoinev, Sofia 1992, but after Paunovic's 8 Bxc4 e6 9 Bxa6! bxa6 10 Nxe4 Nxe4 11 Qf3, I find Black's position rather unconvincing) 8 Bxc4 e6 (**Diagram 14**) 9 0-0! (not hurrying to regain the pawn, whereas 9 Nxc6?! bxc6 10 Bxa6 Bb4 gives Black good play, as pointed out by Ribli), with reasonable play for the pawn: for example, 9...Bb4?! 10 Bxa6 bxa6 11 Nxc6 Qb6 12 Nxb4 Qxb4 13 Qf3 Qxd4 14 Re1 Rd8 15 g4! Nxc3 16 gxf5 Nd5 17 Bg5, winning material, or 9...Nxc3 10 bxc3 and now Black should play 10...Bd6, rather than lose back the pawn after 10...Be7?! 11 Qf3!

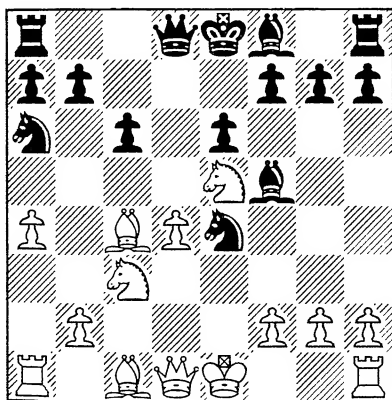


Diagram 14 (W)

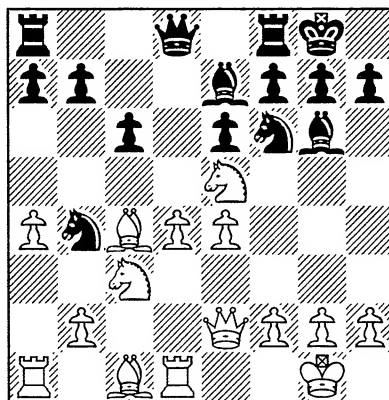


Diagram 15 (B)

c2) More solid is 7 e3 Nb4 8 Bxc4.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: We've now transposed to a position which more normally arises via the move order 6 e3 Na6 (rather than the standard 6...e6 when 7 a5 is seen in Chapter 5) 7 Bxc4 Nb4 8 Ne5.

After 8...e6 (avoiding the trap 8...Nc2+?? 9 Qxc2! Bxc2 10 Bxf7mate) 9 0-0 Be7 (and

Dangerous Weapons: The Queen's Gambit

again not 9...Nc2??, this time because of 10 e4!) 10 Qe2 White is ready to force through e4 with a pleasant edge: for example, 10...0-0 (or 10...Bc2!? and now I quite like Yakovich's idea of 11 a5! 0-0 12 a6! b5 13 Na2 Be4 14 Nxb4 Bxb4 15 Bd3, when White retains an edge due to Black's queenside structural problems) 11 e4 Bg6 12 Rd1 (**Diagram 15**) 12...a5 13 Nxc4! hxg6 14 e5 Nfd5 15 Ne4 Rc8 16 Qg4, which saw White building up a strong attack in E.Geller-E.Gufeld, USSR Championship, Leningrad 1960.

Returning to 6...Nbd7:

7 Nxc4 (**Diagram 16**)

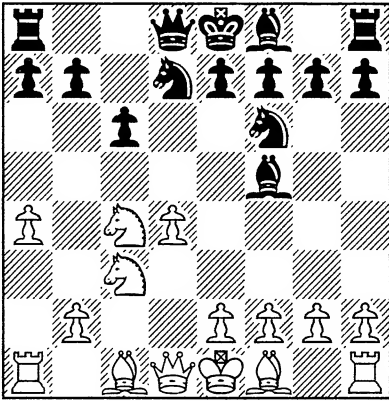


Diagram 16 (B)

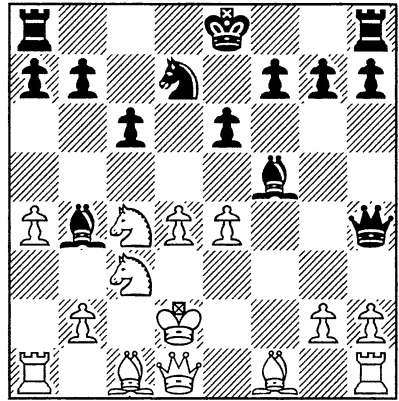


Diagram 17 (B)

In Wells-Fridman we analysed 7...Nd5, but that is not as common a choice as either:

A: 7...Qc7

B: 7...Nb6

Occasionally, 7...e6?! is seen, but this is now misguided as the piece sacrifice no longer convinces: 8 f3 Bb4 (or 8...Be7 9 e4 Bg6 10 Qb3 Nb6 11 Be3 0-0 12 Ne5 Qc7 13 Be2 Rad8 14 0-0, with a very pleasant advantage in R.Palliser-J.Lysons, Bolton 1998; if Black wants to play solidly, he should opt for either Line B or Kramnik's 6...e6 7 f3 c5 8 e4 Bg6, which we saw in the last chapter) 9 e4 Nxe4?! 10 fxe4 Qh4+ 11 Kd2 (**Diagram 17**) and Black doesn't have enough for the piece since White isn't too inconvenienced after 11...Qf2+ 12 Qe2 Qxd4+ 13 Kc2 (E.Magerramov-L.Stratil, Uzhgorod 1988).

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxc4 Qc7 8 Bg5!?
(Diagram 18)

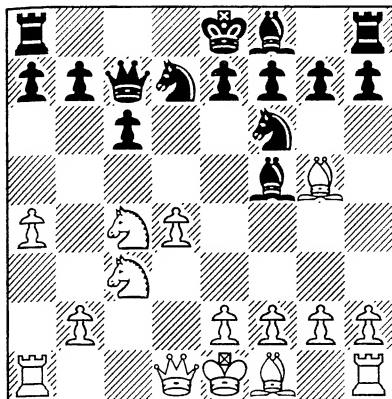


Diagram 18 (B)

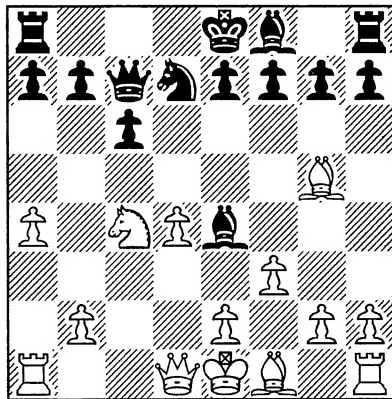


Diagram 19 (B)

Not a bad move, although some readers will no doubt prefer to tackle the theoretical and topical complexities of 8 g3 e5 9 dxe5 Nxe5 10 Bf4 Nfd7 11 Bg2 g5!?

8...e5

Black refuses to be dissuaded from carrying out his ideal central break. Other moves have also been tried, but are less challenging:

a) 8...Ne4 9 Nxe4 Bxe4 10 f3 (Diagram 19) 10...Bg6 (or 10...Bd5 11 e4 Bxc4 12 Bxc4 with a pleasant bishop-pair advantage and even more in the case of 12...e5?! 13 Bxf7+! Kxf7 14 Qb3+ Kg6 15 Qe6+! Nf6 – and not 15...Kxg5? due to 16 h4+ Kf4 17 Kf2 and mates – 16 Qf5+ Kf7 17 dxe5 Bb4+ 18 Kf1! Qd7 19 exf6 Qxf5 20 exf5 gxf6 21 Be3 with an extra pawn in the ending, as indicated by Ftacnik, but not here 18 Ke2? Qd7 19 exf6 Qxf5 20 exf5 Rhe8+ 21 Kd3 gxf6 22 Bf4 Rad8+, which gave Black promising counterplay in I.Ivanisevic-J.Le Roux, Cannes 2006) is solid, but also a little too simplistic and gives White a choice of ways to pursue an edge:

a1) I'm not sure why the straightforward 11 e4 hasn't been more popular. Certainly 11...e5 12 Be2 f6 13 Be3 exd4 14 Qxd4 Bb4+ 15 Kf2 Bc5 16 Qd2 left the d6-square a little vulnerable and White with a pull in A.Anastasian-I.Sokolov, Stepanakert 2005.

a2) 11 Bh4!? e5 12 Bg3 f6 (very similar was the earlier 12...Bb4+ 13 Kf2 f6 14 e3 a5 15 Bd3 Bf7 16 Qc2 g6 of L.Ftacnik-V.Smyslov, Beersheba 1990, and now Ftacnik recommends 17 h4!? 0-0-0 18 h5!, seizing the initiative) 13 e3 a5 14 Rc1 Bb4+ 15 Kf2 (once more we see the white king settling quite comfortably here) 15...0-0 16 Bd3 Bxd3 17 Qxd3 Kh8 18 Rhd1 Rad8 19 Qe4 (Diagram 20) again saw White's central

pressure give him the upper hand in J.Rowson-N.Pert, British League 2005.

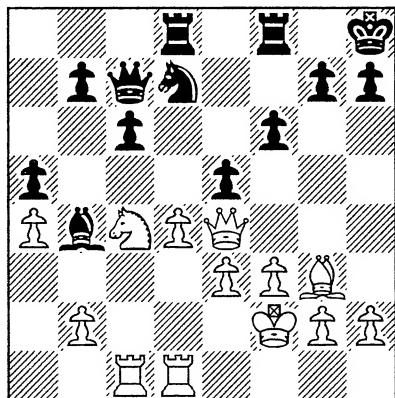


Diagram 20 (B)

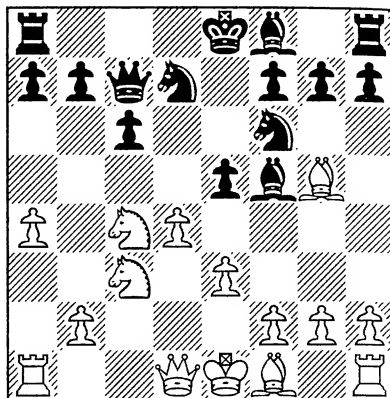


Diagram 21 (B)

b) 8...e6?! unnecessarily cedes the centre and 9 f3 Nd5 (or 9...Bb4 10 e4 Bg6 11 Qf with an edge) 10 e4 Nxc3 11 bxc3 Bg6 12 Qd2 f6 13 Bh4 Be7 14 Rd1 Rd8 15 Be2 0-0 16 0-0 Kh8 17 Qb2 saw White maintain a nagging pull in M.Turov-V.Kuporosov, St Petersburg 2000.

c) 8...Rd8 9 e3 e5 transposes to note 'a' to Black's 9th move.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: Finally, we should note that 8...Nd5 actually transposes to note 'a' to Black's 8th move in Wells-Fridman.

Returning to the consistent 8...e5:

9 e3 (Diagram 21)

Maintaining the tension thus has been the choice of both Aronian and leading 8 Bg5 exponent, Anastasian.



BEWARE! White should avoid the misguided 9 Bh4 Bb4! 10 dxe5?! Ne4 11 Qb3 a5, which gave Black good and easy counterplay, especially after 12 Rc1?! 0-0 13 f3 Nec5 14 Qd1 Nxe5 in the stem game, G.Stahlberg-G.Maroczy, Dresden 1936. No wonder that this variation was scarcely repeated until the nineties!

A more principled choice than the text would appear to be 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 e3, but this leaves Black with quite a dynamic position and active counterplay: for in-

stance, 10...exd4!? 11 exd4 Rg8 (**Diagram 22**) 12 Qf3 Be6 was hardly a success for White in T.Hillarp Persson-J.Hector, Copenhagen 2002, and after 13 h3?! 0-0-0! 14 a5 Bb4 15 Ne3 f5 16 a6 f4 17 axb7+, Black could have gained a strong initiative with 17...Kxb7! (17...Kb8?! 18 Nc2! was much less clear in the game) 18 Nc2 Bd5 19 Qd3 Rde8+.

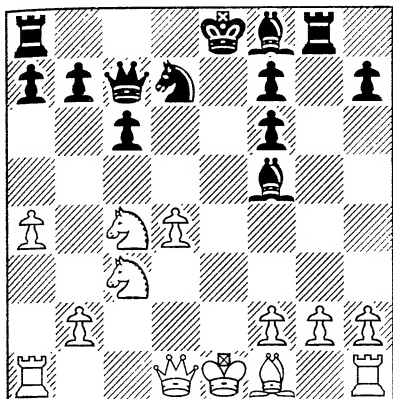


Diagram 22 (W)

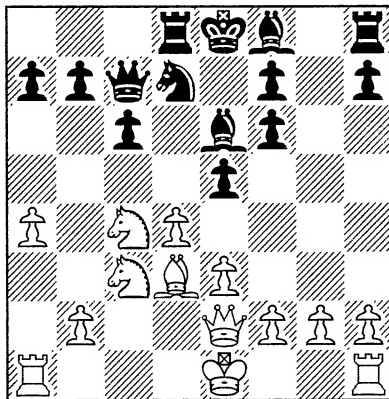


Diagram 23 (B)

9...Be7

This, keeping Black's structure intact, has been the most common option thus far, but again there are alternatives:

a) 9...Rd8 10 Bxf6 (I also wonder about 10 Qf3!?, intending 10...Bg6 11 Qg3 and 10...Be6 11 Bd3) 10...gxf6 gives White an improved version of the notes to his 9th move, since Black can no longer castle queenside, but is still quite messy. Probably best is Hübner's sensible if untested idea of 11 Bd3! (11 Qf3 Be6 12 Rd1 Be7 13 Qg3 Nb6 14 Nd2 Kf8! 15 Qh4 h5 was much messier in R.Kempinski-K.Sundararajan, Biel 2000) 11...Be6 12 Qe2 (**Diagram 23**), retaining prospects for a small edge based on Black's weakened kingside after 12...Nb6 13 Nxb6 Qxb6 (perhaps 13...exd4!? might be inserted, although 14 exd4 axb6 15 Rd1 continues to leave White's the safer king, especially in view of the neat trick 15...Rxd4? 16 Nb5!) 14 dxe5 fxe5 15 0-0.

b) 9...exd4?! 10 Bf4! Qd8 11 Qxd4, followed by 12 Nd6+ gives White a pleasant pull, as in I.Khmelniker-B.Beeke, Vlissingen 2006.

c) 9...Ne4 also fails to equalize: 10 Bd3 Bb4 11 0-0 Bxc3 12 Bxe4 (promising, although so too is the more ambitious 12 bxc3!? Nxc3 13 Qc2 Bxd3 14 Qxd3 Nd5 15 Qa3) 12...Bxe4 13 bxc3 f6?! 14 dxe5 0-0-0 15 Nd6+ Kb8 16 exf6 Ne5 17 Qd4 gxf6 18 Qxe4 left White a clear pawn ahead in A.Barsov-Nguyen Anh Dung, Doha 2006.

10 Bd3 (**Diagram 24**)

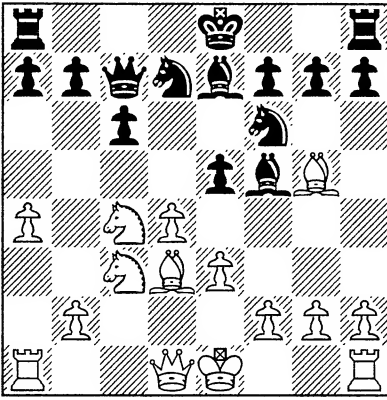


Diagram 24 (B)

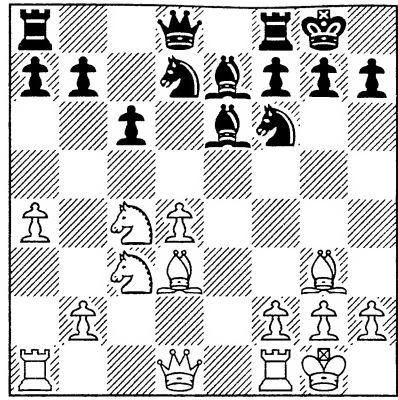


Diagram 25 (B)

10...Be6

Refusing to weaken his light squares, although it's far from clear that 10...Bxd3!? 11 Qxd3 is so bad for Black. D.Bocharov-Z.Andriasian, Moscow 2007, continued 11...0-0 (Black preferred 11...Rd8 in A.Anastasian-E.Hossain, Abu Dhabi 2007: 12 0-0 Nc5 13 Qf5 exd4! 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 Qxc5 dxc3 16 bxc3 b6 gave Black a comfortable draw in the game, so probably White should prefer 12 Qe2 0-0 13 0-0 Rfe8 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 d5, perhaps with a small pull) 12 0-0 Rfe8 and now White should probably try 13 Rfd1!? since 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 d5 Nc5 15 Qc2! e4 16 Rfd1 Rad8 17 d6 Qd7 18 b4 Nd3 19 Nxe4 Rxe4 20 Qxd3 Rxc4 21 Qxc4 Bxa1 22 Rxa1 Qxd6 fully equalized in the game.

11 0-0

It might appear tempting to seize space with 11 a5, but this just seems to help Black make further exchanges. L.Aronian-B.Gelfand, World Team Championship, Beersheba 2005, continued 11...0-0 12 0-0 b5! 13 axb6 axb6 14 Qc2 h6 15 Bh4 Rxa1 16 Rxa1 exd4 17 Bg3 Qd8 18 exd4 Nh5, and Black had equalized.

11...0-0 12 Bh4 exd4 13 Bg3 Qd8 14 exd4 (Diagram 25)

We've been following A.Anastasian-M.Gagunashvili, World Team Championship, Beersheba 2005, which was actually played just a day after Aronian-Gelfand. Black is close to equality here, but still needs to be precise and 14...Bxc4 (Gagunashvili later pointed to 14...Nb6 15 Ne3 Nbd5 as the way to go) 15 Bxc4 Nb6 16 Bb3 a5 17 Re1 Qd7 18 Qf3 Nbd5 19 Be5! saw White maintain a pull in the game.

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxc4 Nb6 (Diagram 26)

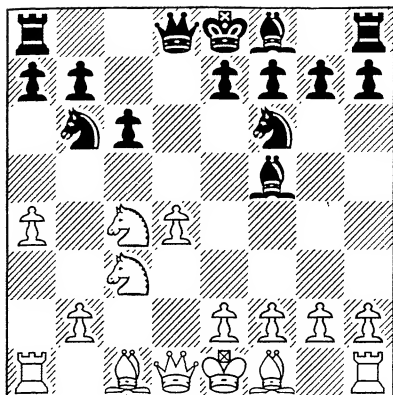


Diagram 26 (W)

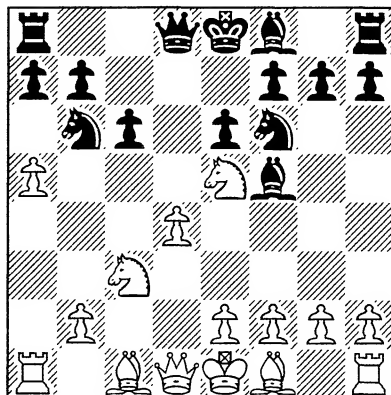


Diagram 27 (B)

A solid choice which is becoming fashionable, especially as the main line with 7...Qc7 accumulates ever more levels of complexity and amounts of theory.

8 Ne5 a5

Black's usual choice, but occasionally 8...e6 is still seen. Now I quite like the attempt to punish the absence of ...a5 with the surprisingly rare 9 a5!? (**Diagram 27**):

a) 9...Nbd5?! 10 a6 Nb4 looks scary, but White should not be scared: 11 e4 (11 axb7 Rb8 – but not 11...Nc2+?? 12 Qxc2! Bxc2 13 Nxc6 and wins – 12 e4 Nxe4 13 Rxa7 is another move order) 11...Nxe4 12 axb7 Rb8 13 Rxa7 (**Diagram 28**) 13...Nxc3!? (the critical try; Black preferred 13...Bd6 in A.Fayard-K.Ninov, Issy les Moulineaux 1991, but after 14 Nxc6!? Qh4? – White's main point is illustrated by 14...Nxc3 15 bxc3 Nxc6 16 Bb5 Be4 17 Qa4 Qc7 18 Ra6, regaining the piece with advantage – 15 Be3 Bf4?, White would have been winning had he found the calm 16 Qa4!, after which 16...Bxe3 fails to 17 Nxb8+ Ke7 18 Qxb4+ Kf6 19 Nd7+ followed by a timely exchange of knights on e4) 14 bxc3 Nc2+ 15 Ke2! (15 Kd2 Nxd4! 16 Ra8 Bd6 isn't so clear) 15...Qb6 16 Ra8 Qxb7 17 Rxb8+ Qxb8 18 g4 Qb5+ 19 Kd2 Qa5 20 gxf5 Nxd4 21 Bg2 Qxe5 22 cxd4 Bb4+ 23 Kd3 Qxf5+ 24 Ke2 and at the end of the complications, Black has nowhere near enough for the piece.

b) 9...Nbd7 10 a6 Qc7 (or 10...Nxe5!? 11 axb7 Rb8 12 dxe5 Qxd1+ 13 Nxd1 Ne4, as in D.Zagorskis-A.Lanc, correspondence 2004: White now got nowhere with 14 Ra4, so might consider 14 Rxa7!? Bb4+ 15 Nc3 Bc5 16 Nxe4! Bxa7 17 Nd6+ Kd7 18 e4, maintaining the passed b-pawn with decent play for the exchange) 11 axb7 Qxb7 was the much more solid course of V.Kruttli-L.Hetey, Budapest 1995, and now 12 Nxd7!? Nxd7 13 f3 Bg6 14 e4 is a reasonable try for an edge, preparing to grab and hold on to the pawn after 14...e5 15 dxe5 Bc5!? 16 Ba6 Qb6 17 f4.

Finally, note that 8...Nbd7?! 9 Qb3! wins the b7-pawn for insufficient return.

9 Bg5!? (Diagram 29)

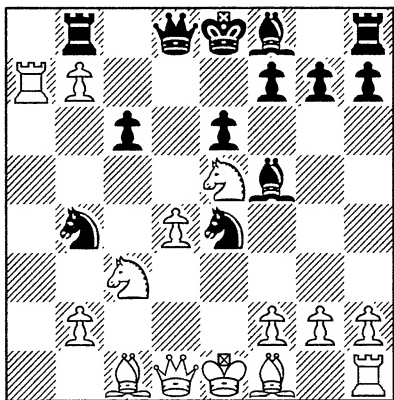


Diagram 28 (B)

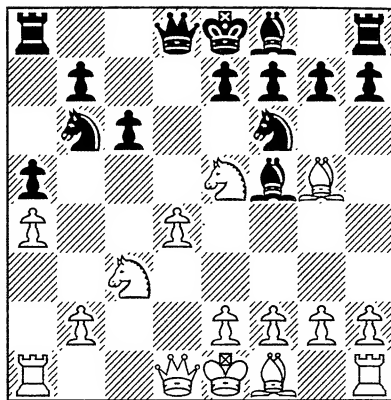


Diagram 29 (B)

One of the more fashionable lines in this book. Until 2005 this natural developing move was extremely rare, presumably because it doesn't help White develop his kingside, but now it is pretty popular.

9...h6

Putting the question to the bishop. Black also has:

a) 9...e6? 10 e4 leaves Black perilously close to losing material and 10...h6 (or 10...Bg6 11 Nxg6 hxg6 12 e5 Rh5 13 h4, forcing Black to give up the exchange) 11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 exf5 leaves his light squares creaking badly.

b) 9...Nfd5 10 e4!? (White can also play more quietly, preferring 10 Qb3) 10...Nxc3 11 bxc3 Bxe4 12 Qb3 Bd5 13 c4 (**Diagram 30**) is quite a dangerous pawn sacrifice:

b1) 13...Be4 14 Qe3 Bf5 15 d5!? (once again White doesn't have to rush and 15 Be2 strikes me as a decent alternative) 15...f6! (Gelfand points out that 15...cxd5 fails to 16 c5 Nd7 17 Bb5 f6 18 0-0-0! fxe5 19 Rxd5) 16 dxc6 (**Diagram 31**) 16...e6? (Black should take his chances in the rather complex position which arises after 16...bxc6 17 Nxc6 Qc7 18 c5 Nd5 19 Qf3 Bd7!) was seen in B.Gelfand-R.Felgaer, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005, and now Gelfand points out that 17 c5! bxc6 18 Nxc6 Nd5 19 Nxd8 Nxe3 20 Bb5+ Kxd8 21 Bxe3 Kc7 22 0-0-0 e5 23 f4 is promising for White.

b2) 13...Be6?! 14 d5!? gives White the initiative after 14...Bf5 15 Rd1, not that 14...Nxd5?! 15 cxd5 Bxd5 was much of an improvement in B.Avruch-M.Eriksson, Saint Vincent 2005, after which 16 Nc4 looks like a decent alternative to the game's much more aggressive 16 Bc4!?

b3) 13...f6?! 14 cxd5 fxe5 was a recent try in S.Feller-D.Arngrimsson, Yerevan 2007, but I'm not too sure what Black intended after 15 Rb1 Nxd5 16 Qxb7 Rc8 17 dxe5, which just looks pretty good for White to me.

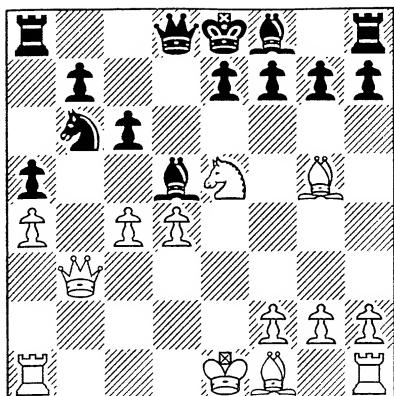


Diagram 30 (B)

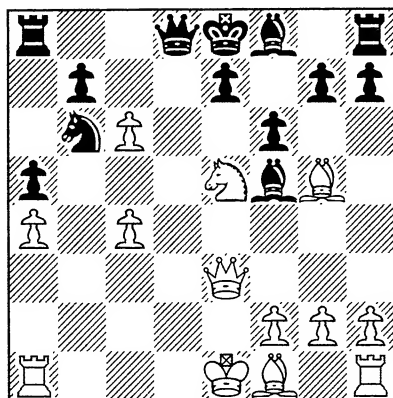


Diagram 31 (B)

c) 9...Nbd5 10 Qb3 Qb6 should be compared with the main line. The inclusion of ...h6 and Bh4 can only help Black and here 11 Qxb6 Nxb6 12 f3 Nfd7 13 Nxd7 Nxd7 14 e4 Bg6 15 0-0-0 was a little better for White in N.Zhukova-M.Velcheva, Predeal 2006.

d) Probably Black's best alternative to our main text is 9...g6!?. Once again White should take over the centre: 10 f3 Bg7 (a model for White was 10...h6?! 11 Bh4 Bg7 12 e4 Be6 13 Be2 0-0 14 Bf2 Qc7 15 0-0 Nh5 16 g3 Nf6 17 Qc2 Nfd7 18 f4, with a definite advantage in V.Babula-K.Kulaots, Dresden 2007; one can see that Black would rather not weaken his kingside with ...h6: without it he may even be able to advance his f-pawn at the right moment) 11 e4 Be6 12 Be3 0-0 13 Be2 (**Diagram 32**) sees White hoping to build up along the same lines as Babula, but Vigus's suggestion (from his fine *Play the Slav*) of 13...Qd6!/? 14 0-0 (or 14 Nd3 Nfd7! 15 e5 Qc7 16 Nf4 Bc4, freeing Black's position, while White would prefer to maintain central flexibility if possible) 14...Nfd7 15 f4 Rad8 is a bit awkward, since Black's queen will now run out to b4. Perhaps 16 Qe1!/, intending 16...Nxe5 17 dxe5 Qb4 18 f5 Bc4 19 f6, is the move which white players should focus their attention on.

Returning to 9...h6:

10 Bh4 Nbd5 (Diagram 33)

Making it as hard as possible for White to get e2-e4 in. The alternatives are somewhat less challenging:

a) 10...e6 11 e4 Bh7 is still pretty solid for Black, but White should not mind being given the centre like this. M.Carlsen-K.Kulaots, Calvia Olympiad 2004, continued 12 f3 Be7 13 Bf2 0-0 14 Be2 Nbd7 (14...Nfd7 has been a more popular defence, not that this really challenges the assessment of a small edge to White: for example, 15 Nd3 Rc8 16 0-0 c5 17 dxc5! Nxc5 18 Nxc5 Bxc5 19 Bxc5 Rxc5 20 Qxd8 Rxd8 21 Rfd1

Rcc8 22 Rab1 left Black still suffering due to his blunted bishop in B.Gelfand-R.Felgaer, Khanty Mansiysk 2005) 15 Nd3 Qb8 16 0-0 Bd8 17 Qb3 Bb6 18 Rad1, with an enduring edge, although Black did eventually hold.

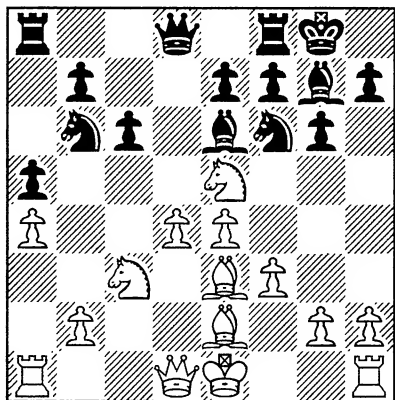


Diagram 32 (B)

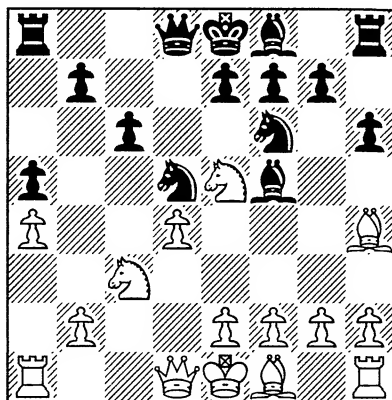


Diagram 33 (W)

b) 10...g5?! merely weakens Black's kingside and after 11 Bg3 e6 12 f3 Bb4 13 e4, White could already be quite happy with his position in S.Atalik-E.Muratovic, Zenica 2005.

c) 10...g6?! 11 f3 transposes to a position considered in variation 'd' to Black's 9th.

11 Qb3 Qb6

The point behind Black's last. Instead 11...Ra6? was too creative even for Kupreichik to get away with in O.Gladyszev-V.Kupreichik, Lipetsk 2007: 12 Nxd5 Nxd5 13 e4 Rb6 14 Qf3 Nf6 15 exf5 Qxd4 16 Bg3 Qxb2 17 Qa3 and White went on to convert his extra piece.

12 Qxb6 Nxb6 13 f3 (Diagram 34)

13...Nfd7

Continuing in solid vein and playing to slowly equalize. Indeed this position is probably somewhere between '+=' and '= ', and personally I quite like White's grinding chances. Chances which are, indeed, real as shown by White's score of + =4 -1 from this position.

Perhaps Black does better with 13...Bc2!?, preventing his bishop from becoming blunted on h7. A.Pashikian-Wang Hao, Yerevan 2007, continued 14 e4 e6 15 Kd2 Bb3 16 Bf2 Bb4 17 Nd3 Nc4+ 18 Kc1 0-0 19 Be2 Rfd8 20 Bd1 Bxd1 21 Rxd1, with near equality, although I'd still take White due to his superior centre.

14 e4!?

Ambitious, but White should not fear an exchange on e5. He has also tried 14

Nxd7 Nxd7 15 e4, which also looks a little more pleasant for him, although after 15...Bg6 16 d5!? e5 17 0-0-0 Bc5 18 Bc4 f6 19 Kb1, Black would have been fine in B.Gelfand-Bu Xiangzhi, World Team Championship, Beersheba 2005, had he opted for the simple 19...Ke7.

14...Nxe5

By no means essential, but 14...Bh7 15 Nd3 (keeping pieces on to emphasize White's spatial advantage) 15...e6 16 Be2 f6 17 Bg3 Be7 18 0-0 g5 19 Bd1! c5 20 Nb5 was a little better for White in yet another game from the 2005 Beersheba World Team Championship, B.Avrukh-Ni Hua.

15 dxe5 Be6 (Diagram 35)

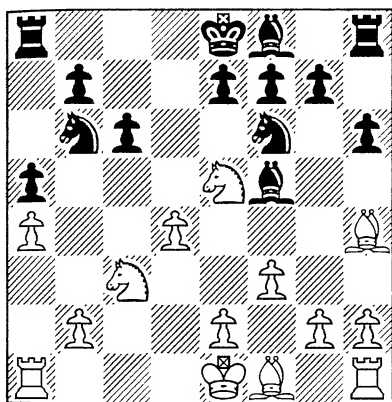


Diagram 34 (B)

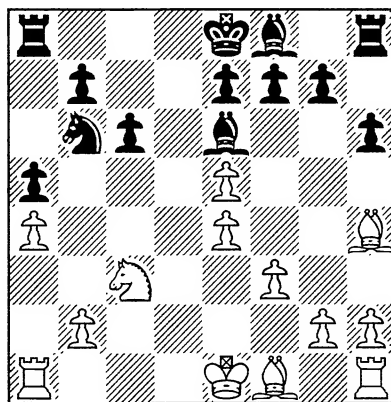


Diagram 35 (W)

This position occurred in two games between Viktorija Cmilyte and Lufei Ruan in the 2006 FIDE Women's World Championship (Ekaterinburg). White's extra central pawns and slightly easier kingside development perhaps supply a small edge: factors which became evident in the first game between Cmilyte and Lufei after 16 Bf2 Nd7 17 f4 g6 18 Be2 f6 19 exf6 exf6 20 0-0 0-0 21 Rac1 Bc5 22 f5! gxf5 23 exf5 Bb3 24 Ne4, with an edge due to Black's kingside weaknesses.

Conclusion

It is not as easy to shock Black after the solid 6...Nbd7 as it is after the more enterprising 6...e6. That said, developing White's dark-squared bishop to g5 is both a good way to avoid a heavy theoretical duel and offers White decent prospects for an edge. That latter point is especially the case after 7...Nd5 8 Bg5, but both 7...Qc7 8 Bg5 e5 and 7...Nb6 8 Ne5 a5 are tougher nuts to crack.

Chapter Five

The a-pawn Cramp

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 a5!?
(Diagram 1)

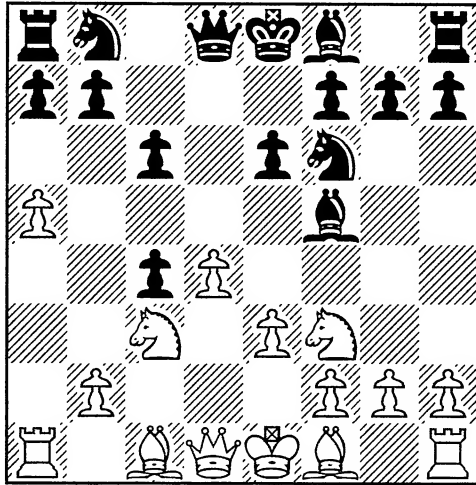


Diagram 1 (B)

Even to those uneducated in the finer points of the Slav, it should come as no great surprise that White's most common continuation by far is 7 Bxc4. After all, 5 a4 was all about preventing ...b5 and 6 e3 was seemingly about recapturing that

pawn on c4 as soon as possible. This chapter, however, is all about taking a timeout to insert the useful move 7 a5:

- i. White seizes space on the queenside and prepares a future a5-a6 to break up Black's queenside pawns.
- ii. Black's queen is prevented from entering the action via b6 or a5.
- iii. In the 7 Bxc4 main line, Black immediately exploits the weakened b4-square with 7...Bb4, often consolidating his grip with a later ...Qa5 or ...a5. Here White's early a5-advance means that he will be able to challenge a black bishop on b4 with Qa4 or even Ra4.

As 7 a5!? is rather rare, relatively speaking there is very little theory on it: a factor which was most certainly an attraction for me when I employed it to gain an opening advantage not that long ago. I am going to start off though by featuring a game in one of the critical variations.

□ V.Eingorn ■ A.Ushenina

Alushta 2004

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 a5!? Bb4 (Diagram 2)

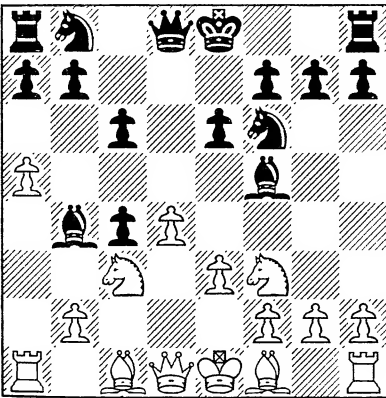


Diagram 2 (W)

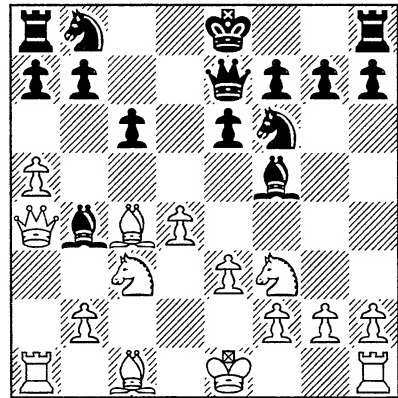


Diagram 3 (B)

This is arguably the most challenging response, although, as we will see, both 7...Nbd7 and 7...Bd3 are also quite common.

8 Qa4

What better piece to take advantage of the vacated a4-square than the white queen. Her majesty guards the a-pawn and puts the question to Black's dark-squared bishop.

8...Qe7

A recurring theme in this variation is that of hunting down Black's light-squared bishop. That occurred with 8...Be7 9 Bxc4 Nbd7 10 Nh4! in W.Uhlmann-M.Nashed, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990, which continued 10...Ne4 11 Nxf5 exf5 12 0-0 Nd6 13 Be2 0-0 14 Rd1 Nf6 15 Bf3 Nde4 16 a6! b5 17 Qc2 Nxc3 18 bxc3 Qd7 19 c4 bxc4 20 Qxc4, leaving White with the bishop-pair as well as a structural advantage.

9 Bxc4 (Diagram 3)

Essentially the fundamental idea behind 7 a5 is that the time invested on the a-file was worth it to make Black's control over the b4-square far less secure. Here Black's queen guards his dark-squared bishop, but we most certainly won't be seeing a ...a5 and ...Na6 follow-up.

9...0-0

If Black wants to completely avoid White's Nh4 plan, he could invest time in an early ...h6, but with things possibly about to kick off in the centre, the value of such an insertion is debatable. Similarly, with Black's queen's knight still at home and his king in the centre, 9...Ne4?! feels a little misguided. White could easily protect the attacked c3-knight with 10 Qb3, but 10 0-0!? Nxc3 11 bxc3 Bxc3 looks like a reasonable pawn sacrifice, especially given the potential pressure down the b-file and the availability of a swift Ba3.

10 0-0 Nbd7 11 Be2! (Diagram 4)

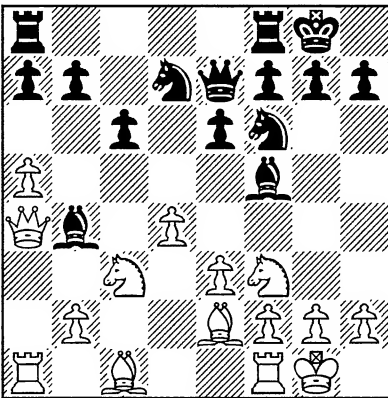


Diagram 4 (B)

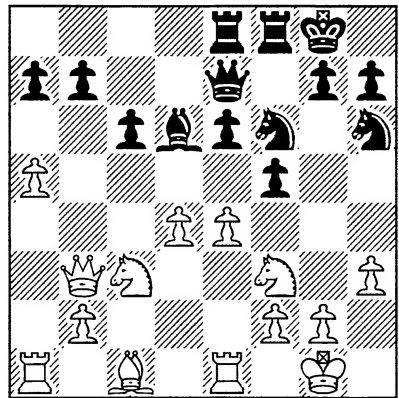


Diagram 5 (B)

11 Nh4 Bg4 12 f3 Bh5 13 g4 Bg6 14 e4 is the other main way of handling the position, but I quite like the controlled manner of the text. The bishop's prophylactic retreat takes the sting out of a ...b5 break, particularly if White has a5-a6 in mind.

11...a6

Two alternatives to nipping the advance of White's a-pawn in the bud are:

a) 11...Bd6 12 Nh4 Bg4 13 Bxg4 Nxd4 14 Nf3 f5 15 Qb3 Ndf6 16 h3 Nh6 17 Re1 Rae8 18 e4 (**Diagram 5**), after which 18...Bb4?! 19 e5 Ne4 20 Nxe4 Bxe1 21 Nd6 Bxf2+ 22 Kxf2 Rb8 23 Ng5 saw White's superiority clarified in P.Wells-C.Morris, British League 2005.

b) 11...h6 12 Bd2 a6 13 Ne4! Bxd2 14 Nxd2 c5 15 Rfc1 Rfc8 16 h3 Bg6 17 Qa3 Kf8 18 Ne5 Bh7 19 Nxd7+ Nxd7 20 Bf3 Rc7 21 dxc5 Nxc5 22 Nb3 saw White's queen-side pressure turn into significant material gain in W.Riedel-N.Christensen, German League 2001.

12 Nh4

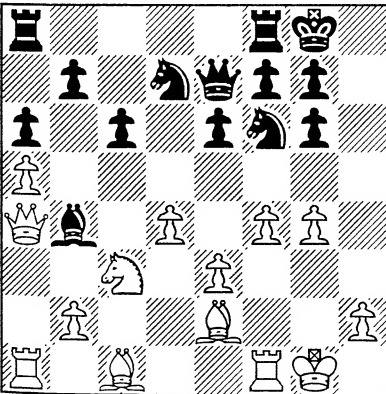
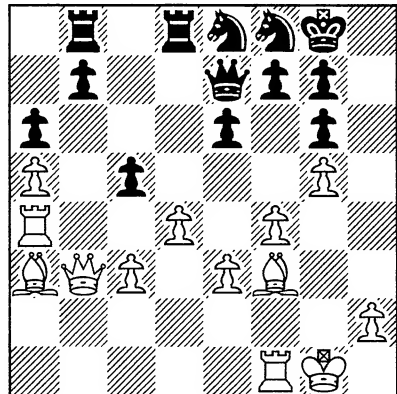
Another interesting game to note is 12 Bd2 Rfc8 13 Rfc1 Bd6 14 Nh4 Bg4 15 f3 Bh5 16 e4 Nd5 17 g3 Nf4 18 Bf1 Ng6 19 Nxd6 Bxd6 20 f4 c5?! 21 e5 Bc7 22 d5 exd5 23 Nxd5 Qe8 24 Bh3 f5 25 exf6 and 1-0 in G.Giorgadze-M.Poleksic, Pula 1990. Clearly Black's play in the early middlegame left a lot to be desired, but that encounter does nevertheless demonstrate the middlegame potential that White's position contains.

12...Bg4 13 f3

Somewhat more exciting than the 13 Bxg4 Nxd4 14 Nf3 style of play.

13...Bh5 14 g4 Bg6 15 Nxd6

If Black hasn't taken time to play an early ...h6, hunting down the black bishop like this is a recurrent theme.

15...hxg6 16 f4! (Diagram 6)**Diagram 6 (B)****Diagram 7 (B)**

In order to secure a bishop for knight advantage, White has had to make some potentially weakening kingside pawn advances. However, the creative Ukrainian grandmaster now finds a way to turn his kingside expansion into a positive asset.

16...Rfd8

It would be too easy to criticize Black's next two moves as being too passive. Indeed, I'm sure that she would have preferred to break with a timely ...c5, but was wary that with the bishop stuck on b4, it could be embarrassed by a sneaky Na2. On the other hand, preparing such an advance with 16...Bd6 walks straight into 17 e4.

17 Bf3

Although White's dark-squared bishop doesn't look too great, at least White has a fluid pawn structure. While some might claim that his position is a little loose, note how careful Eingorn is to prevent any pawn breaks that might embarrass him.

17...Nf8 18 g5 Ne8

After 18...Nd5 19 Bd2 White threatens to win material after an exchange of knights and 19...Nxc3 20 bxc3 Bd6 would leave him with a pleasant choice: either piling up on the b-file or expanding in the centre with 21 e4.

19 Qb3!

Potentially eyeing Black's b-pawn, while vacating the a4-square for the use of another piece.

19...Bd6

Black is still unable to challenge in the centre because 19...c5? 20 Ra4! creates the big threat of 21 Na2 and 20...Bxc3 21 bxc3 Rab8 22 Ba3 (**Diagram 7**) offers a rather favourable comparison of two bishops against two knights!

20 Ne4 Bb8

Black was naturally desperate to preserve her bishop and on c7 it would have interfered with the protection of the b7-pawn.

21 Bd2

No longer prepared to sit on the sidelines, this b4-bound dark-squared bishop is about to prove its worth.

21...Nd6

Sooner or later Black had to get something off of the back rank, but of course this knight immediately finds itself pinned.

22 Bb4 Bc7 23 Bc5 Rab8 24 Qa3

Not that it would be desirable anyway, Black is prohibited from breaking with ...b6 because her bishop would be overloaded.

24...Qd7 25 Nxd6 Bxd6 26 b4 Qe7 27 h4 (Diagram 8)

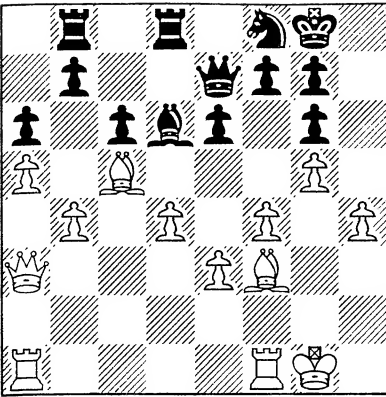


Diagram 8 (B)

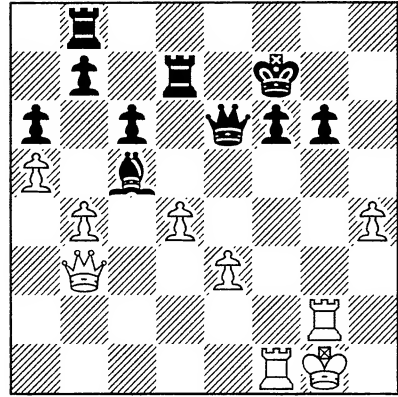


Diagram 9 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! One of several plans available to White is an attack down the h-file while keeping control elsewhere. Black must appreciate that having a space disadvantage means an inability to easily transfer pieces from one side to the other (White has no problems in that department!).

With the ...b6 and ...e5 breaks completely unavailable, Ushenina now turns to the only other area in which counterplay is available.

27...f6 28 Qb3

Unfortunately for Black, her last move weakened the e6- and g6-pawns, and Einhorn is quick to take advantage.

28...Kh7 29 Ra2 Rd7 30 Bg4 Kg8

After 30...f5 31 Bf3 Black would have had zero counterplay, while White would prepare for what could well be a devastating h4-h5 advance.

31 Rg2 Kf7 32 gxf6! gxf6 33 f5!

Black's king position is being opened up like a can of worms! Now 33...gxh5 isn't possible because of 34 Bh5+.

33...Bxc5 34 fxe6+

Of course White could simply recapture on c5, but based on the theme of overloading, he has a neat combination in mind.

34...Nxe6 35 Bxe6+ Qxe6 (Diagram 9) 36 Rxf6+! Kxf6 37 Rxc6!

Winning the queen and the game.

37...Kxg6 38 Qxe6+ Kh5 39 Qxd7 1-0

Looking a Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 a5

Black's most popular response is the challenging 7...Bb4, which we've just examined. He also has:

A: 7...Nbd7

B: 7...Bd3

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 a5 Nbd7 (Diagram 10)

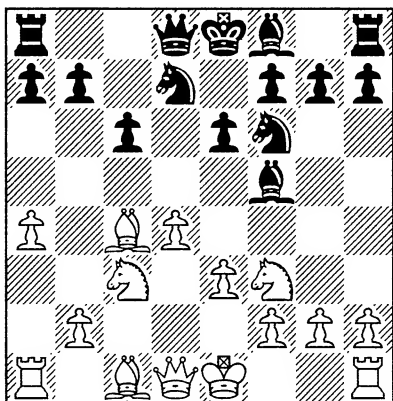


Diagram 10 (W)

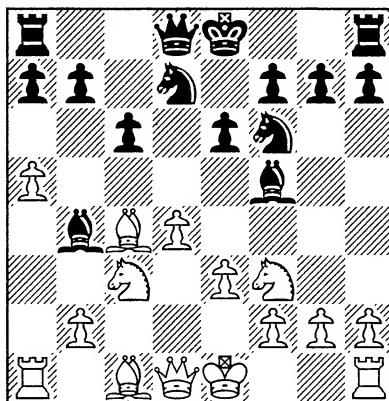


Diagram 11 (W)

Although it is difficult to criticize this developing move, I think it is interesting to note that after the standard 7 Bxc4, overwhelmingly the most common response is 7...Bb4, preventing a future a4-a5.

8 Bxc4

Bearing in mind my last words, surely the first player has gained, although I will leave you to make that judgement yourself. Here I want to at least briefly look at four of Black's possible moves:

A1: 8...Bb4

A2: 8...Be7

A3: 8...Bd6

A4: 8...b5!?

A1) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 a5 Nbd7 8 Bxc4 Bb4 (Diagram 11)

Particularly as White has already regained his pawn, this could be seen as a case of shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. Protecting the pawn on a5 is no problem for White and neither is the pin on the c3-knight.

9 Qa4 Nd5

Trying to make some use of the pin, rather than transpose to Eingorn-Ushenina with 9...Qe7 10 0-0 0-0.

10 Bxd5!

Actually 10 0-0!? isn't even a pawn sacrifice in view of 10...Bxc3 (or 10...Nxc3? 11 Qxb4) 11 bxc3 Nxc3 12 Qb3 Nd5 13 Qxb7, but the unbalanced middlegame reached after the text is also appealing.


10...Bxc3+ 11 bxc3 exd5 12 Ba3

The justification behind conceding the light-squared bishop is that Black is now unable to castle kingside.

12...Nf6

Interestingly Black could claim tit-for-tat after 12...Bd3, but following, say, 13 Qb4 Rb8 14 Qd6 it is obviously the second player who is under the greater pressure.

13 0-0 Ne4 14 c4

 **DANGEROUS WEAPON! With Black's king in the centre, White is naturally eager to open things up.**

14...dxc4 15 Ne5!? (Diagram 12)

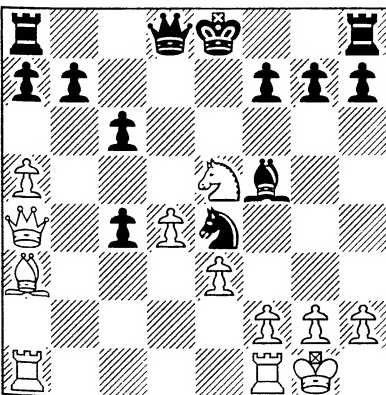


Diagram 12 (B)

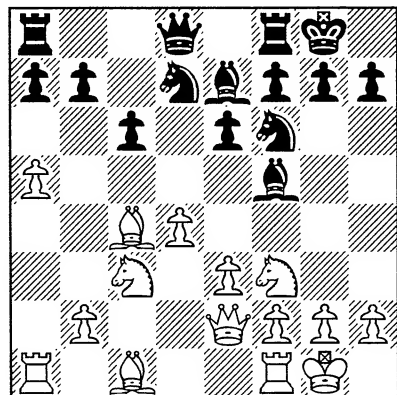


Diagram 13 (B)

Opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker and this is most certainly a good example of that maxim. White can both pressurize Black's queenside and expand in the centre, and it was the latter plan which featured with rather devastating effect in E.Goldenberg-F.Moyano Morales, Balcarce 1961: 15...Be6 16 f3 Nd6 17 a6 b5 18 Qb4 Nf5 19 Nxc6 Qc7 20 e4 1-0.

A2) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 a5 Nbd7 8 Bxc4 Be7 9 Bxc4 0-0

These are the sort of solid moves that some black players might play on autopilot, but I definitely wouldn't recommend this rather planless mode of play.

10 Qe2 (Diagram 13)

White has no such problems finding a plan. His a5-pawn supplies a useful bind on the queenside and prevents any challenging early participation by Black's queen. Often White begins immediate kingside action with the bishop-hunting Nh4, but preparing to expand in the centre is always a useful option too.

10...Ne4

The most obvious way to prevent White advancing in the centre for the time being. A different attempt failed in both the short and the long term in C.Karner-H.Teuschler, Graz 2001: 10...Bb4 11 e4 Bg6 (11...Bxc3? 12 exf5 would be disastrous given White's build up against e6) 12 Bg5 (threatening the piece winning 13 e5) 12...Qc7 13 e5 Nd5 14 Bxd5 cxd5 15 Rfc1 (**Diagram 14**), which highlighted perfectly the advantage of having a pawn on a5. Black's queen has found herself short of squares and 15...Qb8 (rather than the game's 15...Rac8? 16 Nxd5 Qxc1+ 17 Bxc1 exd5 18 Qb5 and 1-0) wouldn't have helped matters in view of 16 Qb5 Bxc3 17 Rxc3.

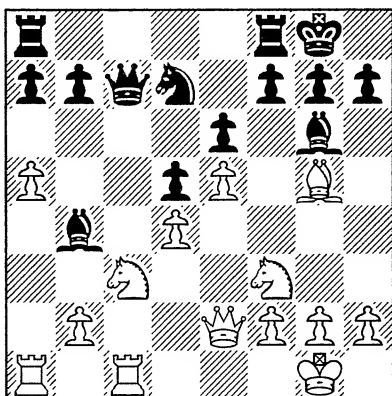


Diagram 14 (B)

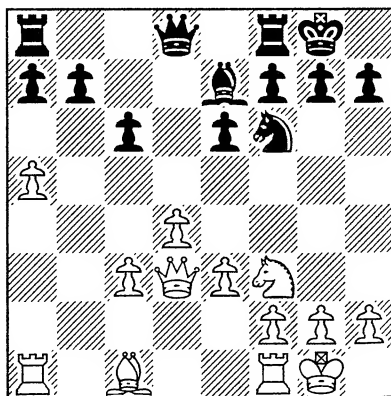


Diagram 15 (B)

11 Bd3 Ndf6 12 Qc2

The probing 12 a6 can also be considered, but the straightforward text forces the black knight to vacate its central post.

12...Nxc3 13 bxc3 Bxd3 14 Qxd3 (Diagram 15)

I don't think that anyone could deny that White has an advantage here. He has an extra centre pawn and obvious potential to do things down the half-open b-file. For me this is reminiscent of a Semi-Tarrasch middlegame and in the following instructive encounter, it becomes more and more like that as the moves pass by: 14...Qc7 15 e4 Rfd8 16 Qe2 c5 17 Bg5 Ne8 18 Bxe7 Qxe7 19 Rfb1 Rac8 20 g3 Rc7 21 Kg2 cxd4 22 cxd4 Rdc8 23 e5 Qd7 24 Qe4 Rd8 25 Rb4 Qd5 26 Nd2 f5 27 Qxd5 Rxd5 28 Nb3 Kf7 29 Nc5 Ke7 30 Rab1 Rd8 31 Rxb7 Rdc8 32 f4 g6 33 Kf3 Ng7 34 Na6 Rxb7 35 Rxb7+ Kf8 36 Nc5 and 1-0 in V.Pirc-R.Michell, Hastings 1932/33.

A3) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 a5 Nbd7 8 Bxc4 Bd6

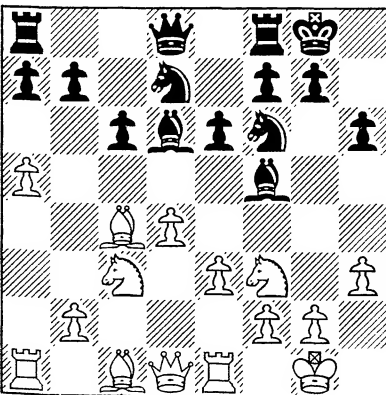
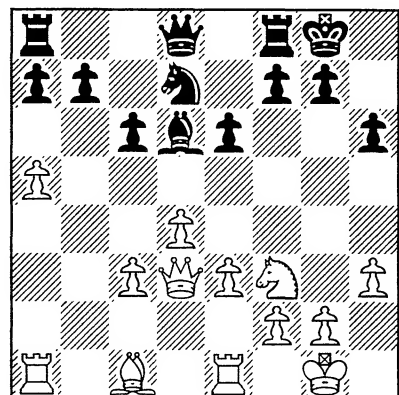
Compared with 8...Be7, Black strives for some action through an ...e5 break, although the bishop is more vulnerable here and things eventually turn out pretty similar in any case.

9 0-0 0-0 10 h3!?

A useful prophylactic move, depriving the enemy bishop of access to the g4-square and thereby adding even more punch to both the e3-e4 advance and the standard bishop-hunting Nh4.

10...h6

By clearing h7 as a retreat square, Black deals with the latter threat, but White now turns his attention to the former idea.

11 Re1 (Diagram 16)**Diagram 16 (B)****Diagram 17 (B)**

11...Ne4

Just as Line A2, Black isn't exactly spoiled for choice in terms of halting White's e4-e5 threat. With the bishop on d6 rather than e7, this time 11...e5 is possible, although I agree with Uhlmann's notes that 12 e4 Bh7 13 d5, though far from forced, is rather nice for White. Again note the cramping role played by the a5-pawn.

12 Bd3 Nxc3

12...Ndf6 13 Qc2 Nxc3 14 bxc3 Bxd3 15 Qxd3 is identical to the final position I assessed in Line A2, except that Black's bishop is on d6 (which is no improvement) and that White has Re1 for free.

13 bxc3 Bxd3 14 Qxd3 (Diagram 17)

The 'better for White' remarks which I made at the end of Line A2 apply here too, although the game W.Uhlmann-J.Horvath, Debrecen 1988, demonstrates a different way of handling the position:

14...Re8 15 Ba3 Bxa3 16 Rxa3 e5 17 Qc4 Rc8 18 Rb1 b5 19 axb6 axb6 20 Ra7 b5 21 Qa2 Rc7 22 Ra6 Qe7 23 Qa5 Rcc8 24 Ra7 Qe6 25 Qa6 Qf5 26 Qa2 Rcd8 27 Rc7 Re6 28 dxe5 Ree8 29 Nd4 Qxe5 30 Rxc6 Nb8 31 Rb6 Qc7 32 Qa5 Rc8 33 Nxb5 Qc5 34 Rb7 Qd5 35 Rc7 Rxc7 36 Qxc7 Qd3 37 Rb4 Na6 38 Qc6 Re6 39 Qc8+ Kh7 40 Nd4 Rg6 41 Rb2 Qd1+ 42 Kh2 Qa1 43 Re2 Qa3 44 f4 Qd6 45 Qc4 Nc5 46 Qxf7 Ne4 47 c4 1-0.

A4) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 a5 Nbd7 8 Bxc4 b5!? (Diagram 18)

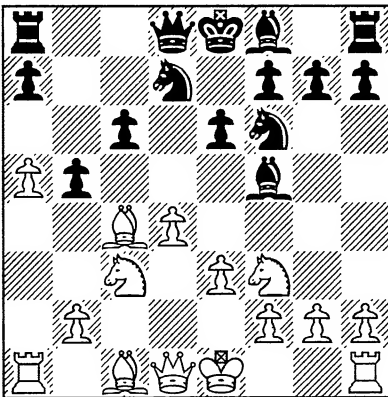


Diagram 18 (W)

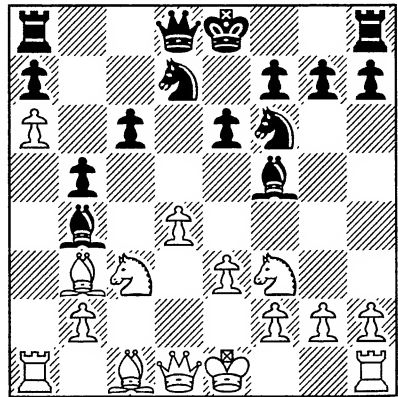


Diagram 19 (B)

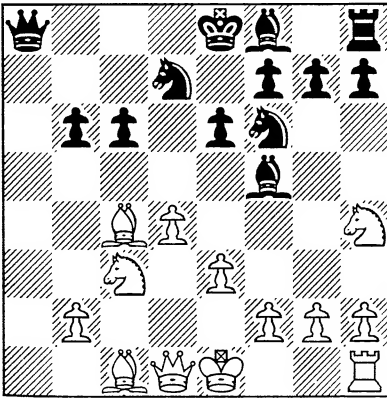
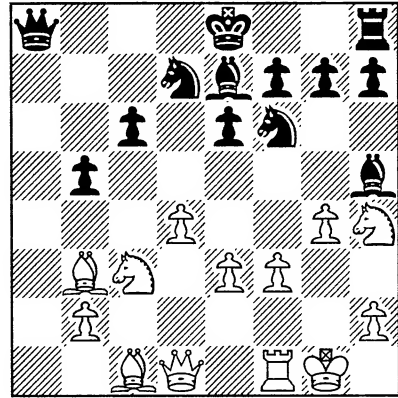
Lashing out in this manner at least justifies Black's last move.

9 axb6

Of course, that's not to say that 8...b5 is definitely a good move. Indeed, I'm slightly caught in two minds about it as, indeed, I am as to whether or not White should utilize the en passant rule. An obvious alternative is 9 Bb3!? Bb4 10 a6 (**Diagram 19**), when White has relinquished control of the b6-square, but the pawn on a6 could be a thorn in the black position. Interesting now was 10...Ne4 11 Bd2 Nxd2 12 Nxd2 0-0 13 0-0 c5 14 e4 Bg6 15 Nxb5 cxd4 16 Ra4 Bxd2 17 Rxd4 Qa5 18 Qxd2 Qxb5 19 Ba4 Qxa6 20 Bxd7 Rab8 21 b4 e5 22 b5 Qa3 23 Rd3 Qe7 24 Bc6 which some might write off as being equal material and hence surely a draw. Upon closer inspection, though, the endgame is rather awkward for Black and the 24...Rfd8 25 Rd1 Rxd3 26 Qxd3 f6 27 h3 Be8 28 Qc4+ Kf8 29 Ra1 Rc8 30 Ra6 Rc7 31 Qd5 Qf7 32 Qd8 Re7 33 Qd6 Qc4 34 Qa3 Bxc6 35 Rxa7 Qe6 36 bxc6 Kf7 37 Rxe7+ Qxe7 38 Qb3+ Ke8 39 Qb8+ Kf7 40 Qb7 1-0 of O.Rodriguez Vargas-J.Iruzubieta Villaluenga, Lleida 1991, suggests that White definitely has more than just a nibble.

9...axb6

Yes, it's not so much that Black's knight is available to recapture on b6, but that his queen now guards the rook on a8.

10 Rxa8 Qxa8 11 Nh4 (Diagram 20)**Diagram 20 (B)****Diagram 21 (B)**

By now the reader should have grasped that this and Qe2, aiming for e3-e4, are White's two main plans. Of course, 11 0-0 first can't be faulted when Black has been tempted by 11...b5 12 Bb3 before 12...Be7 and now after 13 Nh4 Bg4 14 f3 Bh5 15 g4 (**Diagram 21**), rather than drop his bishop back, Black unleashed 15...Nd5 in G.Giorgadze-D.Bлагоjevic, Pula 1990. However, after 16 Nxd5 cxd5 White instigated more complications with 17 Nf5! exf5 18 gxh5, leading to an unbalanced

Dangerous Weapons: The Queen's Gambit

position which ultimately saw White come out on top: 18...Qb7 19 Qc2 g6 20 e4 dxe4 21 fxe4 Qxe4 22 Bxf7+! Kd8 23 Qxe4 fxe4 24 Bh6 Kc7 25 Rc1+ Kb6 26 Bd5 Re8 27 Rc6+ Ka5 28 Re6 Nf6 29 Bd2+ Bb4 30 Bxb4+ Kxb4 31 Rxf6 Rd8 32 Bxe4 Rxd4 33 Bxg6 hxg6 34 hxg6 Kb3 35 Rf3+ 1-0.

11...Bg4

This too should by now be a familiar theme as Black isn't happy with the straightforward 11...Bg6 12 Nxg6 hxg6 13 0-0 Bd6 14 h3 0-0, leaving White with a simple bishop-pair advantage.

12 f3 Bh5 13 g4 Bg6

The bishop has ended up on g6 anyway, but by provoking White's kingside pawns forward, at least Black has mixed things up a bit.

14 0-0 b5

Black is obviously not compelled to insert this, but White was probably going to play in the same manner as he now does in any case.

15 Bb3 Be7 16 Ng2!? (Diagram 22)

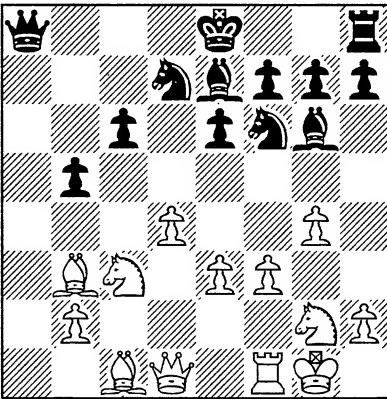


Diagram 22 (B)

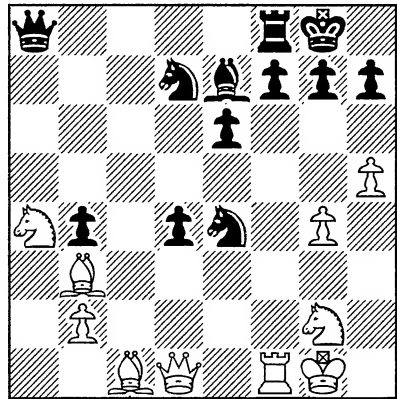


Diagram 23 (W)

Even though Black hasn't yet castled and could possibly get some action down the h-file, 16 Nxg6 hxg6 was certainly plausible, but I quite like the interesting manoeuvre that is now prepared. At the hub of White's slightly odd-looking knight retreat is the redeployment Nf4 twinned with h2-h4. Of course, Black doesn't want to allow the bishop-trapping h4-h5, but he is inhibited from offering a retreat via an h-pawn advance of his own, because of Nxg6 and the resulting significant weakening of the e6-pawn.

16...b4 17 Na4 0-0 18 e4

Upon 18 Nf4 c5 19 h4 cxd4 20 h5, Black saves his bishop with 20...Bb1. The text eliminates that from enquires!

18...c5

Black must at least try to intercept White's plan by creating distractions elsewhere, but White is keeping his mind on the job.

19 h4 cxd4!

With this, Black is essentially sacrificing a piece, although in truth he was pretty much forced to as 19...h6 20 Nf4 Bh7 21 g5 hxg5 22 hxg5 Ne8 23 g6!, overloading the f7-pawn, would have been particularly bad news.

20 h5 Bxe4 21 fxe4 Nxe4 (Diagram 23)

In all fairness, I would probably have described this position as double-edged, because although I usually favour pieces over pawns, I'm not ecstatic about the knight on a4. However, *Fritz* actually observes that White could now reduce the pawn deficit to two with 22 Qxd4 as after 22...Rd8 23 Bc2 Ndc5, the greedy 24 Qxb4 is especially cheeky. Clearly the machine is not remotely worried about losing White's queen. In case you are interested, though, D.Gurevich-J.Bonin, USA 1998, continued: 22 Bc2 Rc8 23 Qd3 Bg5 24 Qxe4 Qxe4 25 Bxe4 Bxc1 26 Rd1 Nf6 27 Bb7 Rc7 28 Rxd4 g6 29 Bf3 gxh5 30 gxh5 b3 31 Rb4 Ra7 32 Rc4 Bd2 33 Kf2 Kg7 34 Ke2 Bg5 35 Nc5 Ra2 36 Nd3 Nd7 37 Rb4 Bf6 38 Rxb3 and with a bit of hard graft, White went on to convert his extra piece.

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 a5 Bd3 (Diagram 24)

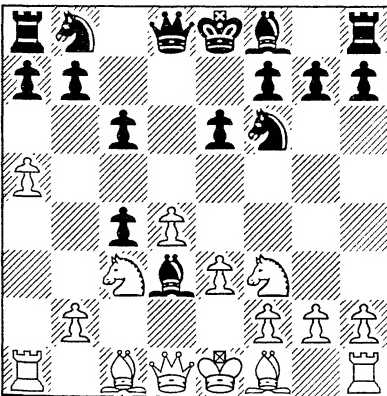


Diagram 24 (W)

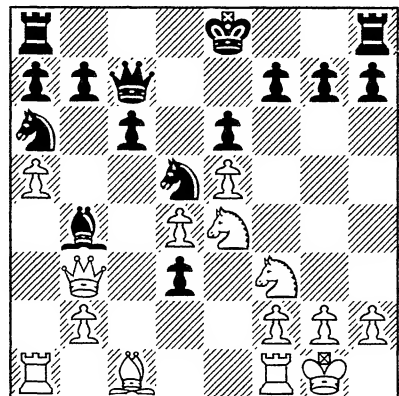


Diagram 25 (W)

Given that we have seen plenty of variations in which this bishop is hunted down and traded off for a white knight, this is quite a logical continuation. Black was

never going to be able to retain his pawn on c4 and so arguably returning it immediately is a cheap price to pay for the chance to engage in a straight bishop swap.

8 Bxd3 cxd3 9 Qb3!

Although it may look bizarre to move the queen anywhere other than to the d3-square which the extra black pawn is on, White takes the view that that pawn isn't going anywhere and that he will pick it up later. Moreover White's queen fulfils two worthwhile tasks on b3: it prevents ...Bb4 and by attacking b7, it interferes with Black's queenside development.

9...Qc7

For sheer time-consuming reasons, 9...Qc8 10 0-0 Na6 11 e4 Bb4 12 e5 Nd5 13 Ne4 Qc7 (**Diagram 25**) couldn't possibly constitute an improvement. After 14 Qxd3 Black can't take on a5 anyway as the white knight would get an early chance to invade on d6, while 14...h6 (avoiding dangerous Ng5 ideas after Black castles) 15 Bd2 saw White aiming to later park his knight on the cherished d6-outpost in M.Orsag-V.Trichkov, Prague 1994.

Note too that after 9...Na6, White can accept the offering with 10 Qxb7, because 10...Nb4 is tactically well met by 11 Ne5! Be7 (or 11...Nc2+ 12 Kd2 Nd7 13 Nxd7 Nxa1 14 Ne5) 12 Nxc6 Nxc6 13 Qxc6+ Kf8 14 Qc4, as occurred in O.Andersen-P.Johansson, Trondheim 1997.

10 e4 (Diagram 26)

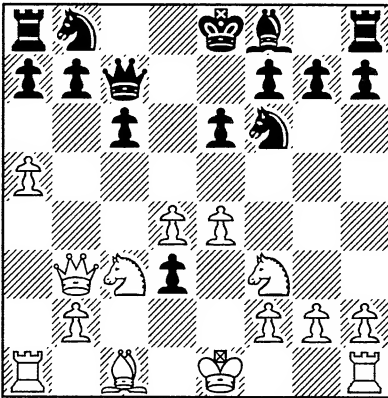


Diagram 26 (B)

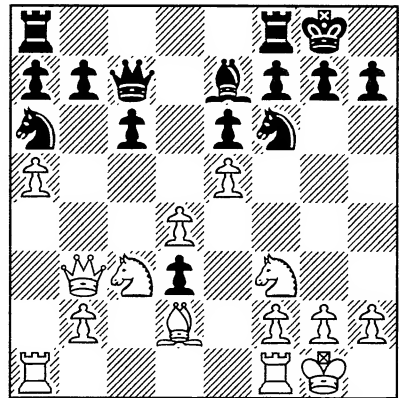


Diagram 27 (B)

We are actually following one of my own games and as White I didn't see anything wrong with advancing in the centre immediately, although I'm also impressed with a different encounter: 10 0-0 Be7 11 e4 0-0 12 Bg5 Nh5 13 Be3 Na6 14 e5 g6 15 Ne4 Nb4 16 g4 Ng7 17 Nf6+ Kh8 18 Ng5 c5 19 Rac1 Qd8 20 Ngxh7 cxd4

21 Bd2 Nd5 22 Qxd3 Bxf6 23 Nxf6 Nxf6 24 Bg5 Nge8 25 exf6 Kg8 26 b4 Qd7 27 f4 Rc8 28 Rcd1 Nc7 29 Qh3 Rfd8 30 f5 gxf5 31 gxf5 d3 32 Be3 Qd5 33 Rf4 and 1-0 in M.Orsag-I.Jankovec, Klatovy 1995.

Given that Black is surely going to play something constructive after 10 e4, it hardly seems worth mentioning (but I'm going to all the same!) that Black needs be wary of a Bf4 deflection as Qxb7 could net the a8-rook.

10...Na6

To illustrate my last point, check out 10...h6?! 11 Bf4! Qc8 12 0-0 Na6 13 d5 Nc5 14 Qc4 Nh5?! 15 Be3 cxd5 16 exd5 Be7 17 b4 Nd7 18 Qxd3 exd5 19 Nxd5, which already gave White a winning position in W.Klewe-J.Barczyk, correspondence 1990.

Less ambitious than the text is 10...Nbd7 11 0-0 a6, when White has a slight advantage pretty much whatever he plays.

11 0-0 Be7

I can vaguely recall expecting 11...Bb4 12 e5 Nd5 13 Ne4, but decided after the less-forcing text to hold back on e4-e5 for a move. Note that an important concept in these positions is that although d5 is a great square for a black knight, it can only house one knight at a time, thereby leaving the other relatively redundant.

12 Bd2 0-0 13 e5 (Diagram 27) 13...Nd7

While this knight could have immediately settled itself on d5, at this point Black was probably intending to manoeuvre his other knight there.

14 Ne4 Rfd8 15 Rfc1

The d3-pawn will soon fall and the text is designed to pin the c6-pawn, thereby dissuading its advance.

15...Nf8

This uncovers the rook on d8 and provides some defence for the king. Indeed, that latter feature is definitely useful as after the inevitable recapture on d3 you can be sure that the h7-pawn will soon come under scrutiny.

16 Qxd3 Ng6 17 Qc4 (Diagram 28)

The downside of this position for White is that he is missing his light-squared bishop and the dark-squared bishop that remains has various pawns reducing its scope. However, White's knights are the better placed and his pawns on a5 and e5 give him useful options on both flanks.

17...Qd7 18 b4!

Another pawn hits a dark square, but I think that the clamping effect that this pawn has on the c5-square justifies its inclusion.

18...Nc7 19 Nc5 Bxc5 20 bxc5 a6

Presumably after 20...Nd5, Black was frightened by the concept of 21 a6!? and certainly I had that in mind as a serious candidate.

21 Bg5 Rf8 22 Re1 (Diagram 29)

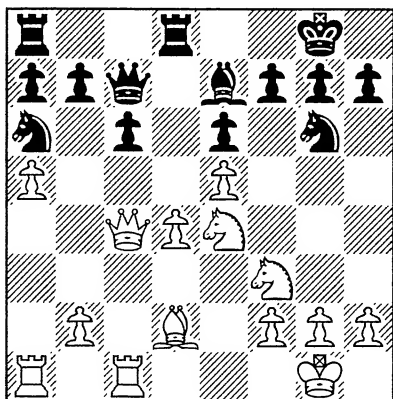


Diagram 28 (B)

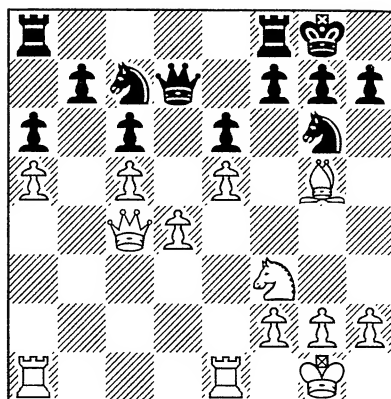


Diagram 29 (B)

While Black has no obvious way of improving his position, White has an attractive plan of Nd2-e4-d6. Although Black does his best to prevent such a manoeuvre, in what follows I opted to sacrifice a pawn to see that idea come to fruition: 22...Nb5 23 Rad1 h6 24 Be3 Qd8 25 Nd2!? Qxa5 26 Ne4 Qd8 27 Nd6 Nxd6 28 cxd6 Qd7 29 Ra1 a5 30 Qc3 b6 31 f4 f5 32 g3 Rfc8 33 Reb1 Rab8 34 h3 Kh8 35 Kh2 Nf8 36 Rb2 Qe8 37 g4 Qf7 38 Qd3 g6 39 Rg2 Nd7 40 Rag1 Rg8 41 gxf5 gxf5 42 Qc4 Rxg2+ 43 Rxg2 Rc8 44 Qa6 Rb8 45 Qa7 Kh7 46 Qc7 c5 47 dxc5 bxc5 48 Bxc5 Rb3 49 Bf2 a4 50 Qc4 Rb8 51 Qxa4 Rg8 52 Bh4 Rxg2+ 53 Kxg2 Qg8+ 54 Kf3. This was C.Ward-K.Solomon, Gibraltar 2007, in which I'd managed to win a pawn and although it's hard graft, the endgame was winning for White.

Conclusion

7 a5!? has a definite appeal to a lot of Queen's Gambiteers. My own experiences have lead me to the conclusion that most Slav players are well booked-up and by avoiding 7 Bxc4, White takes Black away from all his solid theory. There haven't (yet!) been that many games with 7 a5 and this chapter constitutes rare documentation of this offbeat system.

From the word go Black is forced to deviate from his standard Slav strategy of parking and supporting his bishop on b4, and while White isn't necessarily aiming for an early kill, there are some sharp variations. Possibly more to the point though, is that as far as I can see, White isn't actually risking anything and I can honestly say that I haven't come across any forcing variations in which White is in serious danger of standing worse. Indeed, it's well worth giving 7 a5 a try!

Chapter Six

The Hodgson-Smallbone Variation

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bg4 6 Ne5 Nbd7!?

(Diagram 1)

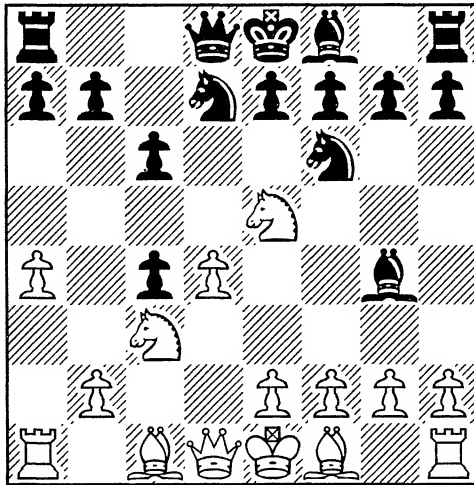


Diagram 1 (W)

At first it may appear that Black has blundered, but this variation actually contains an extremely well-disguised trap: 7 Nxg4 Nxg4 8 e4 e5! 9 Qxg4 exd4, with a strong initiative and two pawns for the piece, as a number of unfortunate white

players have discovered.

A quick word on the nomenclature. This obscure sideline, often neglected by theory and not featured in, for example, Graham Burgess's generally pretty thorough *The Slav*, doesn't have an existing name. Thus I've decided to name it after its two main adherents: the extremely talented, if now unfortunately prematurely retired, grandmaster, Julian Hodgson, and the strong English amateur player, Kieran Smallbone. The presence of Hodgson is especially telling: he has been happy to play this line against strong grandmasters who have known better than to take the piece. Thus 6...Nbd7 can be recommended to all Slav players looking to spice up their repertoires.

Firstly, let's see how a respected author and theoretician coped when faced with the Hodgson-Smallbone.

□ J.Cox ■ K.Smallbone

London League 2006

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bg4 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxg4! Nxg4 8 e4

Oh so tempting, as surely Black must have blundered by not playing the standard 6...Bh5, but anyone thinking along such lines is in for a nasty shock.

8...e5! (Diagram 2)

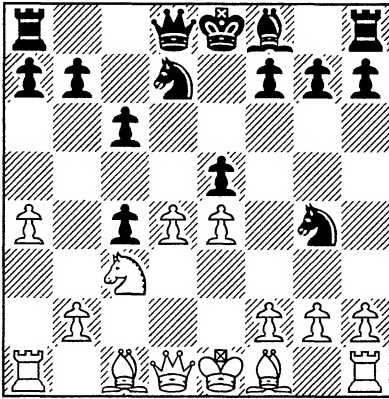


Diagram 2 (W)

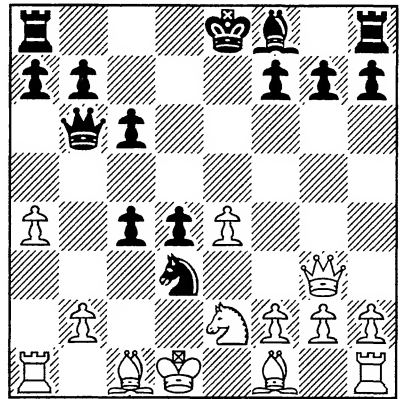
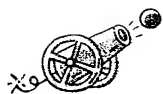


Diagram 3 (W)

The key follow-up. Otherwise White simply gains both the centre and the bishop-pair.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! It's notable that John Cox, writing shortly after this game in his *Starting Out: 1 d4*, described this dangerous piece sacrifice as 'a vicious trap which for practical purposes White should avoid with 8 e3'.

9 Qxg4

White doesn't have to accept the piece, but after 9 d5 Ngf6 10 dxc6 bxc6 11 Bxc4 Bc5, Black has a perfectly acceptable position, as we will see in more detail below. The key feature of the position is Black's typically Slav split queenside pawns, which give him control of the key d5-square and potential pressure down the b-file.

9...exd4 10 Nb1

White usually retreats thus, hoping to bring the knight back into play via d2, but he does have alternatives in this extremely unexplored position, which we'll return to in more detail in the 'Looking a Little Deeper' section, below. For now I'll just mention two plausible errors:

a) 10 Ne2? completely underestimates Black's initiative and after 10...Ne5 11 Qg3 (or 11 Qf5 Nd3+ 12 Kd1 Qb6, again with superb compensation) 11...Nd3+ 12 Kd1 (perhaps further gumming up White's development with 12 Kd2!? is a relatively better try, although I still rather like Black's initiative after 12...Bd6! 13 f4 0-0 14 Kc2 Bb4 15 f5 Be1!, and 12...Nc5!? is promising too) 12...Qb6! (**Diagram 3**), Black's rampant queen and knight combination gives him a huge initiative: for example, 13 Kc2 Nxf2 14 Qe5+ Be7 and White will emerge material in arrears, such as after 15 Qxd4 Nxe1 16 Qxg7 Qb3+ 17 Kb1 Qd3+ 18 Ka2 0-0-0.

b) 10 Nd1? has been surprisingly recommended in both *ECO* and Ribli's *D16-D19* monograph, but I'm not convinced in view of Smallbone's 10...Bb4+! (or first 10...Qa5+, and this plan appears much stronger than Ribli's somewhat slower suggestion of 10...d3) 11 Bd2 Qa5 (**Diagram 4**) 12 Qf4 (after 12 Qe2!?, Black can probably do even better than regain the piece with 12...c3, by preferring 12...Nc5!) 12...c3, regaining the piece with some advantage after 13 bxc3 dxc3 14 Nxc3 Bxc3 15 Be2 Nc5.

Returning to the materialistic 10 Nb1:

10...Qa5+! (**Diagram 5**)

Disrupting White's development. This is far stronger than the alternatives: for example, 10...Ne5?! 11 Qg3! (11 Qd1?! Bc5 12 Be2 Qa5+ 13 Bd2 Qb6 gave Black good compensation in H.Eitel-K.Kretschel, Ingolstadt 1989) 11...Bb4+ 12 Bd2 Qa5 13 f4!? Bxd2+ 14 Nxd2 c3 15 bxc3 dxc3 16 Nb3 Qb4 17 fe5 Qxb3 18 Be2 Qb2 19 Kf2 sees Black coming up short.

11 Bd2

A critical alternative is 11 Nd2!?, which made its debut in the game M.Jurka-K.Smallbone, Brno 2004. That continued 11...d3 12 g3 and now I feel that Black

shouldn't rush, preferring to rely on the long-term nature of his compensation with 12...Ne5!? (instead 12...Bb4 13 Bh3 – White may well be able to get away with 13 Qxg7!? 0-0-0 14 Bh3 c3 15 Bxd7+ Kb8 16 bxc3 Bxc3 17 Qxf7 Bxa1 18 0-0 – 13...0-0-0 14 Qf4 h5!? 15 0-0 g5 was inspired but ultimately not fully satisfactory for Black in the game), and now:

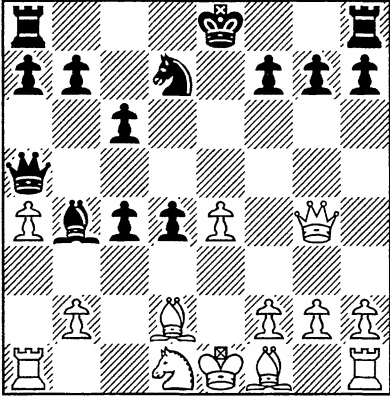


Diagram 4 (W)

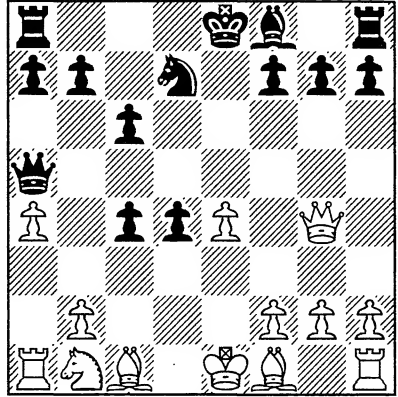


Diagram 5 (W)

a) 13 Qf4 c3!? (Black might also play more slowly, but after 13...Bb4 14 Bg2 0-0 15 0-0 Rad8 16 Rd1 Rfe8, White has the d2-square under control and can play to gradually unravel after 17 Nf1) 14 bxc3 Qxc3 15 Rb1 Bb4 16 Bh3 Nc4 17 0-0 Nxd2 18 Rxb4 Qxb4 19 Bxd2 Qe7 with a mess: White's bishop-pair is a dangerous asset, but Black's rooks will find opportunities down the d-file and his queenside majority should not be underestimated.

b) 13 Qf5 Bb4 (now 13...c3 14 bxc3 Qxc3 15 Rb1 Bb4 16 Bh3 is unconvincing in view of 16...Nc4? 17 Qd7+) 14 Bg2 0-0 15 0-0 Rfe8 (**Diagram 6**), which doesn't seem at all clear to me since it's not so easy for White to unravel in view of 16 Rd1 Rad8 17 f4 (as the d2-knight cannot move without material loss, this is the only real way to untangle) 17...c3! 18 bxc3 Bxc3 19 Ra2 (perhaps 19 Rb1!?, although after 19...Qxa4 20 Rf1 Nc4 21 Nxc4 Qxc4, Black remains quite active and has three pawns for the piece) 19...Qb6+ 20 Kh1 Nc4! and Black retains a rough balance due to the tactical point 21 Nxc4 Qb3.

11...Qb6

The main point behind Black's last.

12 Bxc4

Aggressive, but perhaps White should prefer 12 Bc1!?. However, Black doesn't have to repeat: both 12...d3 and 12...Qb4+!? 13 Nd2 c3 14 bxc3 dxc3 15 Nc4 c2+ 16

Nd2 Rd8 being tempting ways to play on.

12...Qxb2!

Stronger than 12...Ne5 13 Bxf7+ Nxf7 14 0-0, which isn't so bad for White who has managed to castle; something Black won't find so easy to arrange after 15 Qe6.

13 Bxf7+ Kxf7 14 Qxd7+ Be7 (Diagram 7) 15 Ra3??

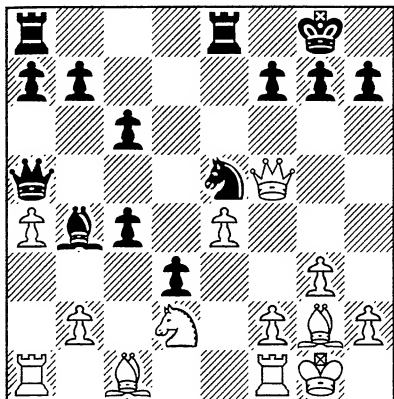


Diagram 6 (W)

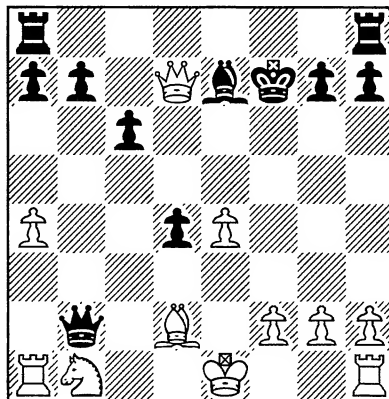


Diagram 7 (W)

Was this caused by a rush of blood to the head or just sheer panic as Cox began to fall further and further behind on the clock? Somewhat better are:

a) 15 Bg5 Rhe8 16 0-0! (the best try, whereas after 16 Qf5+?! Kg8 17 Qe6+ Kh8 18 Bxe7 Qc1+ 19 Ke2 Qxh1, White can't untangle his queenside and Black is doing well, such as following 20 Qd6 Qc1 21 Kf3 d3) 16...Qxa1 17 Qf5+ Bf6 (a decent alternative is 17...Kg8 18 Qe6+ and now Black can either repeat or rely on his large queenside majority with 18...Kh8!? 19 Bxe7 Qxa4) 18 Bxf6 gxf6 19 Qxh7+ (**Diagram 8**) 19...Ke6!? (risky, but necessary if Black wants to win since 19...Kf8 20 e5! fxe5 21 Nd2 gives White a strong enough attack to at least draw) 20 Nd2 Qc3 21 Qf5+ Ke7 22 Nf3 d3 23 e5 fxe5 24 Nxe5 Rad8 sees Black's king remaining rather exposed, but perhaps it will be able to escape White's perpetual hopes, such as with 25 Qh7+ Ke6 26 Qg6+ Kd5 27 Nxd3 Kc4!?

b) 15 0-0 Qxa1 16 Qf5+ (16 Bg5 Rhe8 transposes to variation 'a') 16...Ke8 (this position can also arise after 15 Qf5+ Ke8 16 0-0 Qxa1) 17 Qh5+ Kd8! (17...g6?! 18 Qe5 Kd7 19 Nc3! isn't so clear), and White shouldn't have enough for the exchange, despite Black's misplaced king: for example, 18 Qe5 Qxa4 19 Qxg7 Re8 20 Bf4 c5 21 Qxh7 Qd7 and Black's four connected passed pawns look the stronger!

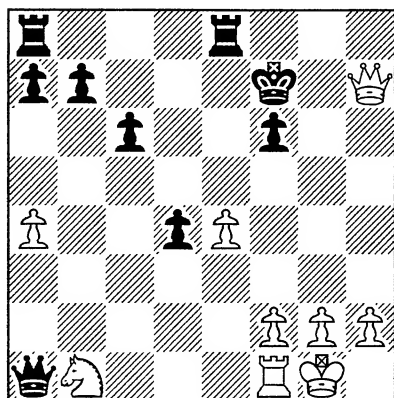


Diagram 8 (B)

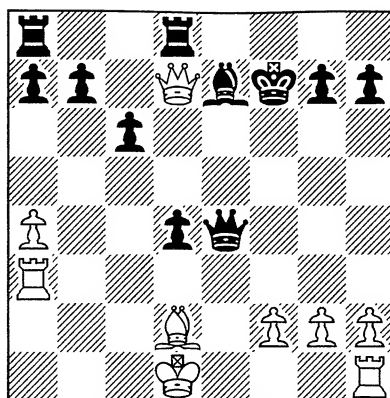


Diagram 9 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Even White's superior alternatives fail to dent the notion that after just 14 moves he is already scraping around for enough compensation to draw: a situation which Black should be pretty happy with!

15...Qxb1+ 16 Ke2 Qxe4+ 17 Kd1 Rhd8 (Diagram 9)

Driving away White's queen and surely heralding a decisive black attack.

18 Qxb7

Or 18 Qc7 Qb1+ 19 Bc1 d3 20 Qf4+ when Black has a pleasant choice between 20...Kg8 21 Qc4+ Rd5, with two extra pawns and a rather useful initiative, and the even stronger 20...Ke8!, after which 21...d2 wins a piece.

18...Rab8 19 Qxa7 Kg8

Calm, but there was no need to hold back: 19...Rb1+! 20 Bc1 d3 21 Ra2 Qc4 would have forced resignation.

20 Ra1 Rb1+

It is usually a good idea to play the first win one sees, so long as it is actually winning, and so I won't criticize Smallbone here, but 20...Rb2! 21 Qa5 Re8 would have been even more clinical.

21 Rxb1 Qxb1+ 22 Ke2 d3+?!

Giving White a small hope that his king might escape. Much better was 22...Qe4+! 23 Kd1 d3 24 Qe3 (or 24 Re1 Qc4) 24...Qxa4+, retaining a decisive attack.

23 Ke3 Bg5+ 24 Kf3 (Diagram 10)

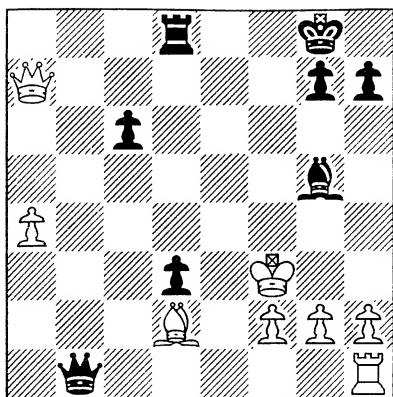


Diagram 10 (B)

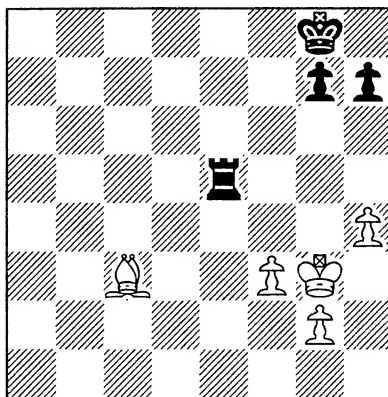


Diagram 11 (B)

24...Rf8+?!

Smallbone's play might appear rather lax at this juncture, but to be fair this game was played in the evening and at some rather rapid rate. Here 24...Qxh1! 25 Bxg5 d2 would, once again, have won with some ease.

25 Kg3 Qxh1 26 Bxg5 Qa1 27 Qe3 Qxa4 28 Qxd3

Black should still be winning, but clearly the position has undergone something of a transformation: White hasn't been mated.

28...Qb5 29 Qe3 Qd5 30 f3 c5 31 Be7 Rc8 32 Qf4 Re8 33 Qc7 c4 34 h4

Smallbone has recovered well from missing a number of easy wins in the earlier drama, but now collapses once again. Either now or on the previous turn, ...Qf7 would have forced the queens off with an easy win.

34...c3? 35 Bb4

Now the c-pawn must fall and after 35...Qe5+ 36 Qxe5 Rxe5 37 Bxc3 (**Diagram 11**),

Cox went on to hold the exchange-down ending. A remarkable recovery by him, but also a demonstration of just how quickly White can get into serious trouble when he grabs the piece.

Looking a Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bg4 6 Ne5

By far White's main move since advancing his e-pawn walks into a pin. Occasionally, though, White does just that:

a) 6 e3 e5!? (**Diagram 12**) makes good use of the light-squared bishop's active development to begin central counterplay. Now:

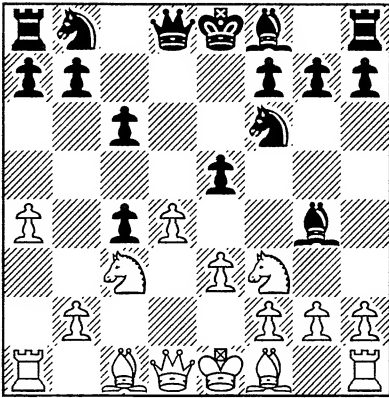


Diagram 12 (W)

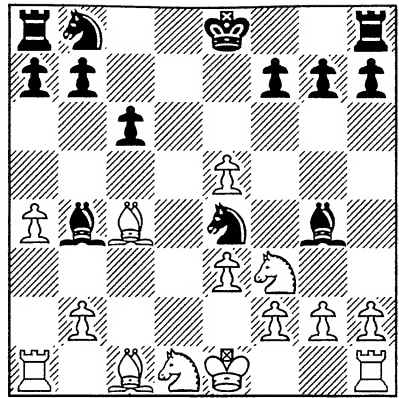


Diagram 13 (W)

a1) 7 dxe5 Qxd1+ 8 Nxd1 (Black has easy equality after 8 Kxd1 Nfd7 9 Bxc4 Nxe5, and here 9 e6! Ne5! 10 exf7+ Kxf7 11 Kc2 Bxf3 12 gxf3 Na6 13 Ne4 Nb4+ was dangerous only for White in W.Schmidt-O.Melzer, Eppingen 1988) 8...Ne4!? (the most combative approach, but a good alternative is 8...Nfd7 9 Bxc4 Bxf3 10 gxf3 Nxe5 11 Be2 Bb4+, with easy and equal play for Black after both 12 Bd2 Bxd2+ 13 Kxd2 a5! 14 f4 Ned7 15 Nc3 Nc5, I.Skorohodov-S.Sergienko, Kaluga 2003, and 12 Nc3 a5 13 f4 Ned7 14 Bd2 Nc5 15 Bc4 Nbd7 16 Ke2 Rd8, as in K.Arkell-M.Lahtinen, London 1989) 9 Bxc4 (or 9 Nd2 Bb4 10 f3 Nxd2 11 Bxd2 Bxd2+ 12 Kxd2 Be6 13 Kc3 b5 14 b3 a5!, with decent queenside counterplay in A.Luczak-P.Stempin, Porabka 1986) 9...Bb4+ (**Diagram 13**) 10 Ke2 (White must avoid 10 Nd2?? Bxd1 11 Kxd1 Nxf2+, while 10 Bd2 Nxd2 11 Nxd2 Nd7 12 f4 gives Black a number of options, including the ambitious 12 ...f6!? and Kondratiev's 12...Bxd1 13 Rxd1 Nc5 14 Ke2 Nxa4) 10...Nd7 11 h3, with a further divide:

a11) 11...Nxe5 12 Bxf7+! Kxf7 13 hxg4 Nxg4 14 Rh4 h5 15 Ne5+ Nxe5 16 Rxe4 Bd6 17 Nc3 Rad8 18 Bd2 was the game G.Forintos-N.Kirov, Vrsac 1973, which both Forintos and ECO have assessed as slightly favouring White, but it's hard to believe that Black can't gain sufficient counterplay after 18...Ng4.

a12) A much more recent idea is 11...Bh5!? 12 g4 Bg6 (as well as castling long and playing ...Rhe8, Black also has ideas of an undermining ...h5) 13 e6!? fxe6 14 Bxe6 Ndc5 15 Ba2 Rf8! 16 Ne5 0-0-0 17 Nxg6 hxg6 18 Rg1 Nd3 (**Diagram 14**), which gave Black a rather dangerous initiative in P.Baillet-A.Wirig, Sautron 2004.

a2) 7 Be2 exd4 (7...Bxf3 8 Bxf3 exd4 9 exd4 Be7 10 0-0-0 is more unbalancing, but 11 Qe2 Nbd7 12 a5! proved a little awkward in S.Timofeev-M.Nedochetov, Tula 1998) 8 Nxd4 (otherwise Black gains a pretty comfortable anti-IQP position) 8...Bxe2 9 Qxe2 Bc5!? 10 0-0 0-0 11 Qxc4 Nbd7 12 b4!?! Bb6 13 Nf3 (and not 13 a5?

due to 13...Ne5 14 Qb3 Bxd4 when Black wins a pawn since 15 Rd1? Bxc3 16 Rxd8 Raxd8 costs White even more material) 13...Qe7 was Esterkin-I.Dolgov, St Petersburg 1992, and now Dolgov mentions 14 a5!? Bc7 15 a6 Ne5 16 Nxe5 Bxe5 17 axb7 Qxb7, which is about equal.

a3) 7 Bxc4!? Bxf3!? (taking up the challenge, but Black can and perhaps should play it safe with Sapis's 7...exd4 8 exd4 Bd6!) 8 Qxf3 exd4 9 exd4 Qxd4 10 Qe2+ Be7 11 0-0 could perhaps be described as White's most 'dangerous-weapons-like response' to our dangerous weapon! He has decent pressure for the pawn, but Black has a creative and forcing reply in 11...0-0!? 12 Rd1 Qc5 (**Diagram 15**)

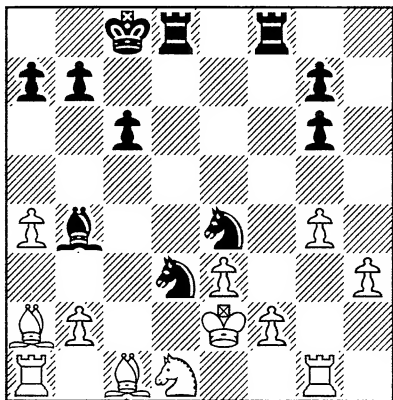


Diagram 14 (W)

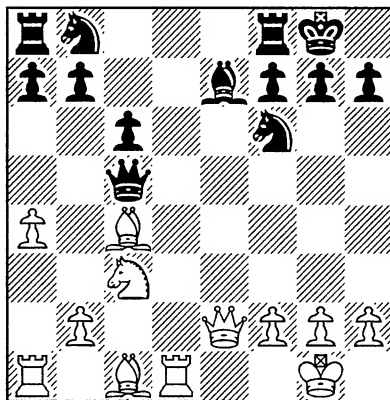


Diagram 15 (W)

13 b4 Qxb4 14 Ba3 Qxa3! (stronger than Dolgov's earlier 14...Qxc3? when 15 Qxe7! Nbd7 16 Rac1 Qa5 17 Rxd7 Nxd7 18 Qxd7 is problematic) 15 Rxa3 Bxa3 16 Ne4 Nbd7, which was a decent, if not fully clear, queen sacrifice in V.Chernoshek-I.Dolgov, correspondence 1991.

b) 6 e4 e5!? (once again I like this counter-thrust, although with White's centre now a little overextended, there's also a good case for 6...e6 7 Bxc4 Bb4: for example, 8 Qd3 Bxf3 9 gxf3 c5!? 10 d5 exd5 11 exd5 0-0 was rather unbalanced and gave Black decent counterplay in L.Ogaard-V.Kupreichik, Dortmund 1975), and again White has three main options:

b1) 7 Be3 (the choice of the few grandmasters to have stumbled into this rare position) 7...Bb4 (**Diagram 16**) 8 Bxc4 (or 8 dxe5 Qxd1+ 9 Kxd1 Bxc3 10 exf6 Bxf6 11 Bxc4 Nd7, with full equality) 8...exd4 9 Bxd4 0-0 10 e5?! (too ambitious, but Black's active pieces give him good counterplay against White's centre in any case) 10...Nfd7 11 0-0 was prematurely agreed drawn in J.Fedorowicz-T.Witke, St Martin 1991, presumably because the grandmaster didn't like the look of his position after 11...c5 12 Be3 Nc6, when White must give up a pawn with the not wholly convincing 13 e6 fxe6 14 Qd6.

b2) 7 Bxc4?! Bxf3 8 gxf3 exd4 9 Qb3 Qe7 doesn't give White enough for his pawn: 10 Ne2 is met by 10...Qb4 and the 10 Na2 of J.Hase-C.Garcia Palermo, Montevideo 1976, should be met not by a speculative sacrifice on e4, but rather 10...Na6! 11 Bxa6 bxa6 12 Qc4 Qc5 13 Qxa6 Bd6, with advantage.

b3) White has also been known to trade queens, but the option of 7 dxe5 Qxd1+ 8 Kxd1 Nfd7 9 Bf4 isn't that big a gain for him, as was shown by 9...Bc5 10 Bg3 Bd4 11 e6!? fxe6 12 Bxc4 Nc5 13 h3?! Bxf3+ 14 gxf3 a5 15 Kc2 Nbd7, which gave Black a reasonable position in L.Khusnutdinova-V.Avdeeva, Serpukhov 2004.

Returning to the much more common 6 Ne5:

6...Nbd7 (Diagram 17)

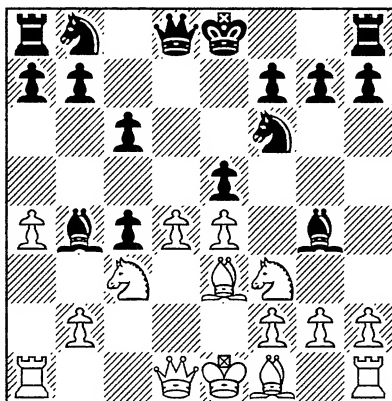


Diagram 16 (W)

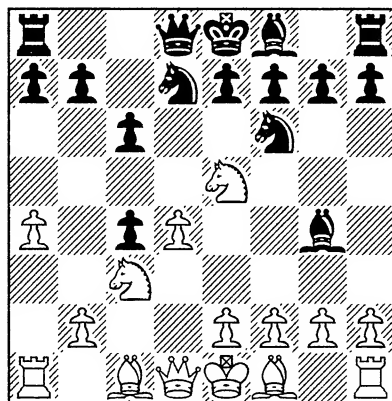


Diagram 17 (W)

7 Nxc4

Rarely can white players resist taking the bishop-pair, but other moves are possible:

a) 7 Nxc4!? was the great Capablanca's choice in the stem game, J.R.Capablanca-A.Dake, New York 1931, and has surprisingly been repeated just once. Following 7...Qc7 8 g3 e5 (in view of what follows, attention should be given to 8...0-0-0!? before breaking with ...e5) 9 dxe5 Nxe5 10 Bf4 (**Diagram 18**), the position is very similar to an important theoretical tabiya, except that Black's light-squared bishop is on g4, not f5.



BEWARE! Black should not repeat Dake's seemingly natural 10...Nfd7?? in view of 11 Nxe5 (Capablanca actually played 11 Bg2) 11...Nxe5 12 Qd4, which wins material because the g4-bishop is loose.

Better is 10...Rd8 when 11 Qc1 Nfd7 12 Bxe5 Nxe5 reaches a critical divide:

a1) 13 Qf4 Bd6 loses material with the bishop on f5 (after 14 Qxf5 Nxc4 15 Qe4+ Ne5 16 f4), but here it doesn't and 14 Nxd6+ (14 Nxe5?! Be6 15 0-0-0 Bxe5 16 Rxd8+ Kxd8 17 Qe3 Kc8 gives Black promising play with his powerful bishops) 14...Qxd6 15 Bg2 0-0 gives Black easy equality.

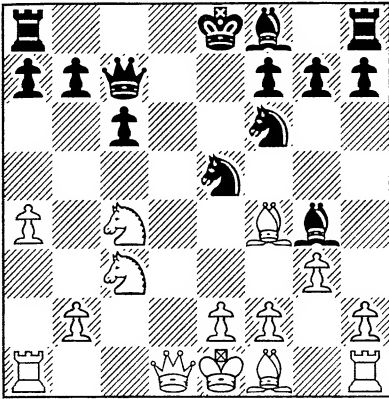


Diagram 18 (B)

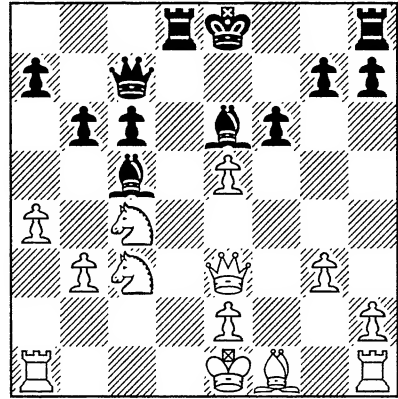
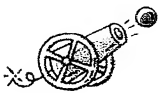


Diagram 19 (W)

a2) Somewhat more problematic is 13 Qe3! f6 14 f4, as was played in F.Calandri-E.Conti, correspondence 1988. Black must then find the accurate if daring 14...Be6! (Black doesn't have enough after 14...b5 15 axb5 cxb5 16 fxe5! Qxc4 17 exf6+ Qe6 18 Qxe6+ Bxe6 19 Rxa7) 15 b3 (one of Black's main ideas is that 15 fxe5 Bxc4 16 exf6+ Kf7 17 fxg7 Bxg7 gives him plenty of activity and open lines for the pawn; there's also 15 Na3?!, but then 15...Qa5! 16 fxe5 Bc5 17 Qf3 0-0 supplies extremely dangerous play for the piece) 15...b6 16 fxe5 Bc5 (**Diagram 19**), reaching a critical position. Black's bishops are pretty active and White's kingside development and king position a source for concern, but is there really enough for a whole piece here? After some investigation, I think that there probably is. For example, 17 Qc1 (or 17 Qe4 0-0 when 18 Bg2? is impossible on account of 18...Bd5 and even 18 Nb2!? Bd4 19 Nbd1 f5!? 20 Qc2 Qxe5 sees Black keeping up the pressure, with typical compensation for this variation: just how is White to unravel and get his king to safety?) 17...Bxc4 18 bxc4 Qxe5 19 Qc2 0-0 20 Bg2 Rd4 21 Rf1 Rxc4, picking up a second pawn and retaining good dark-square play.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Even with the simple 7 Nxc4, White is not in for an easy ride and may find himself confronted with a critical piece sacrifice. Black most certainly should not, though, neglect Capablanca's choice in his preparations.

b) 7 f3 hopes to trick Black into an inferior version of the 6...Bh5 main line, but Black can and should prefer to defend his extra pawn: 7...Be6! (**Diagram 20**) 8 Nxd7 (White would prefer not to have to exchange knights, but after 8 e4 Nxe5 9 dxe5 Qxd1+ 10 Nxd1 Nd7 11 f4 g6 his position will come under awkward pressure after ...Nc5) 8...Qxd7 (Black should also consider 8...Nxd7!? 9 e4 Nf6, when it's not at all easy for White to regain his pawn as 10 a5 is well met by 10...b5!) 9 e4 and now Black has a pleasant choice between 9...a5, followed by ...g6 and ...Bg7, and the sharper 9...0-0-0!? 10 Be3 g5.

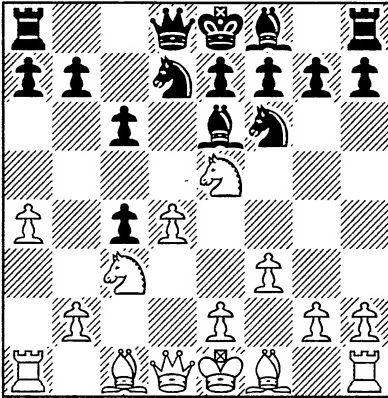


Diagram 20 (W)

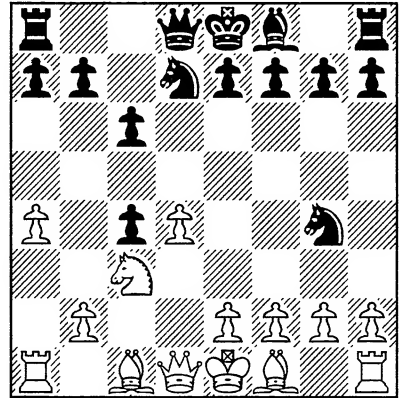


Diagram 21 (W)

Returning to the usual 7 Nxe4:

7...Nxe4 (Diagram 21)

We will now consider:

A: 8 e4

B: 8 e3

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bg4 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxe4 Nxe4 8 e4 e5 (Diagram 22) 9 Qxe4

Sometimes White bottles out with 9 d5 which isn't such a bad move, although after 9...Ngf6 10 dxc6 bxc6 11 Bxc4 Bc5 12 0-0 0-0 (**Diagram 23**), Black is quite comfortable with the d4-square for his bishop and easy play on the queenside.

P.Bonafont-K.Smallbone, Kidlington 2004, continued 13 a5 (13 Bg5 Rb8 14 Qc2 h6 15 Bh4 Bd4 16 Rab1 Qa5 saw Black already pressing on the queenside in Brackenhofer-R.Schlamp, Aachen 1982) 13...Rb8 14 Qe2 Bd4 15 Kh1 Qe7 16 Bg5, and now 16...Nc5 is a decent alternative to the game's 16...Qb4.

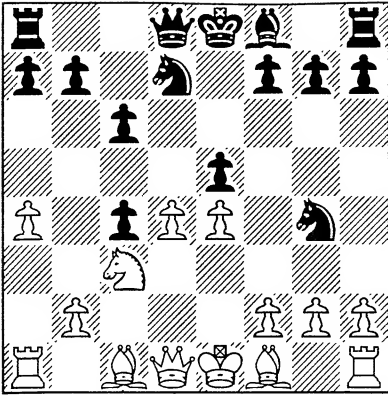


Diagram 22 (W)

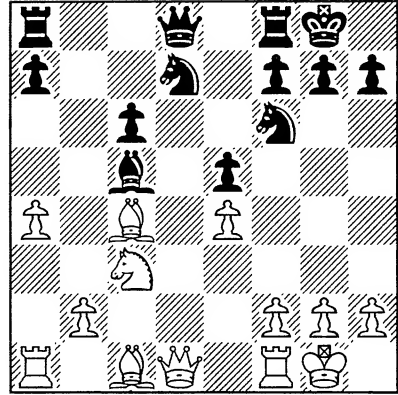


Diagram 23 (W)



ROLL THE DICE! Black can also play 11...Bb4!? which appears risky in view of the tactical trick 12 Qb3 Qe7 13 Bxf7+!? Qxf7 14 Qxb4, but after 14...Rb8 15 Qd6 Qc4 (Diagram 24) matters are by no means so clear with both kings inconvenienced.

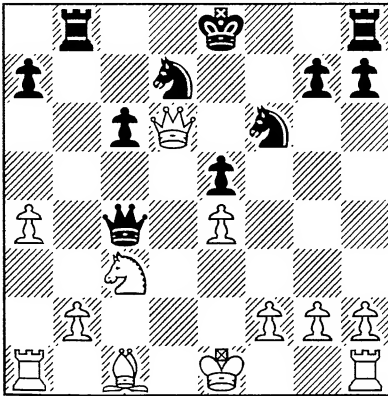


Diagram 24 (W)

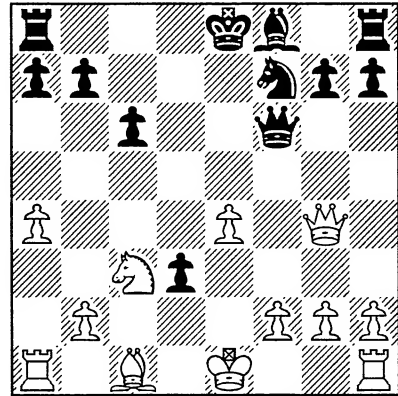


Diagram 25 (W)

I suspect that objectively Black may be a little worse here, but over the board anything could happen. P. Van der Sterren-M. Kuij, Dieren 1979, continued 16 f3 Kf7 17 Kf2 and now 17...Nc5! (17...Qd4+?! 18 Qxd4 exd4 19 Nb1 wasn't too clear in the

game, but with 19...Nc5 20 Rd1 Rb4 21 Nd2 Nfd7 22 b3 White was gradually unravelling and consolidating) 18 Rd1 Rb7 gives Black decent counterplay with ...Rd7, before or after ...Nb3, on the cards.

9...exd4

As we saw in Cox-Smallbone, 10 Nb1 is now White's main try. There we also considered the overly-greedy 10 Ne2? and 10 Nd1?. More important alternatives are:

A1: 10 Na2

A2: 10 Bd2

There's also 10 Bxc4?!, which is an attempt to return the piece to get developed, but after 10...Ne5 11 Qe2 d3! (Smallbone), White's play is fairly unconvincing. Indeed I'd much prefer to be Black following 12 Bxf7+ Nxf7 13 Qg4 Qf6 (**Diagram 25**) 14 0-0 (or 14 Qf5?! Qxf5 15 exf5 Nd6 16 Kd2 Nxf5 17 Kxd3 0-0-0+ 18 Kc2 Nd4+ 19 Kb1 Nb3, with a clear advantage) 14...Bc5 15 Bf4 0-0.

A1) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bg4 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxc4 Nxc4 8 e4 e5 9 Qxc4 exd4 10 Na2 Qa5+!

Collecting a third pawn. Black probably, though, shouldn't push his pawns too quickly and after 10...d3 11 Bd2 Nf6 12 Qf3 Qd4, as in T.Paszkievicz-R.Janik, Polanica Zdroj 1999, 13 Nc3, followed by a kingside fianchetto and short castling would have been a little problematic.

11 Bd2 Qxa4 (Diagram 26)

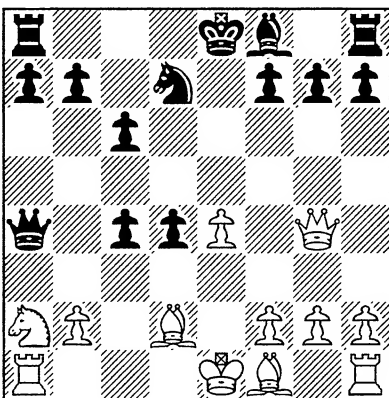


Diagram 26 (W)

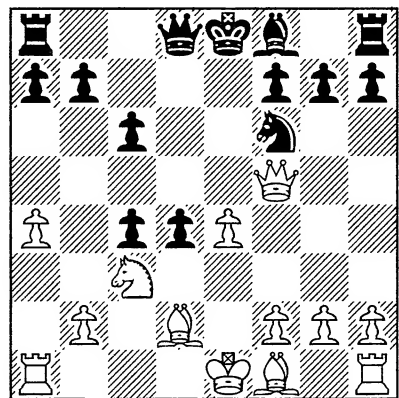


Diagram 27 (B)

This position is extremely unclear, but Black should be fairly happy with this most unbalanced of situations. Here's a possible continuation: 12 Qd1 (12 Be2?! Qc2! poses problems since 13 Rc1 Qxb2 14 Bxc4 Ne5 15 Bxf7+ – or 15 Qe2 d3! – 15...Kxf7 16 Qf5+ Kg8 17 Qxe5 Qxa2 18 Qxd4 Be7 leaves White a pawn and, perhaps more importantly, a whole queenside in arrears) 12...Qxd1+!? (Black can also keep the queens on: 12...Qb5 13 Rc1 d3 14 Nc3 Qe5 is another far from clear position; again Black's extra pawns cramp White somewhat awkwardly) 13 Rxd1 b5 14 Nb4 Bxb4 15 Bxb4 c5 gives Black a mobile and dangerous pawn phalanx for the piece.

A2) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bg4 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxc4 Nxc4 8 e4 e5 9 Qxc4 exd4 10 Bd2!? Nf6

Instead 10...Ne5? 11 Qg3 Nd3+ fails to convince after 12 Bxd3 dxc3 13 Bxc3 cxd3 14 0-0-0, and 10...Qe7 11 Nb1 Nf6 12 Qh4 Qe6 13 f3 also appears to come up short with Na3 on the way.

11 Qf5 (Diagram 27)

This is a much better way than 10 Bxc4 of returning the piece, and has been played by Semen Furman, the strongest player to have accepted Black's piece sacrifice.

11...Qe7!

Superior to the 11...dxc3?! of A.S.Zakharov-F.Fernandez Barrera, Linares 2000, which continued 12 Bxc3 and now 12...Qc8!? (trying to exchange off White's powerful queen; 12...Qd7?! has similar aims, but 13 Qxd7+ Kxd7 14 0-0-0+ Kc7 15 Be5+! Kb6 16 Bxc4 is awkward, while 12...Be7 13 Bxc4 0-0 14 Rd1 Qc8 15 Qf3 gave the Russian IM a comfortable edge in the game) 13 Qxc8+ Rxc8 14 f3! Bc5 15 Bxc4 Rd8 16 Rd1 prevents Black's idea of 16...Bd4, and while Black is pretty solid, White does have a standard Slav endgame pull due to his bishop-pair.

12 0-0-0

Prudent, whereas 12 Nb1?! Nxe4 13 Kd1 g6 14 Qf3 d3 gives Black excellent play for his piece, and now we have a final divide:

A21: 12...dxc3

A22: 12...g6

A21) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bg4 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxc4 Nxc4 8 e4 e5 9 Qxc4 exd4 10 Bd2 Nf6 11 Qf5 Qe7 12 0-0-0 dxc3 13 Bxc3 Qc5

This was my initial idea, albeit one which appears quite risky.

14 Bxf6

White can also rush forward with 14 e5 Nd5 15 e6, after which 15...f6 is extremely

unclear and there's also a case for 15...fxe6!? 16 Qxe6+ Qe7, intending 17 Qxe7+ Bxe7 18 Bxg7 (or 18 Bxc4 Nxc3 19 bxc3 Rf8 20 f3 Rf4 with full equality) 18...Rg8 19 Bd4 b5 20 g3 a6!?, with a messy Semi-Slav-like situation.

14...Qxf5 15 exf5 gxf6 16 Bxc4 Rg8! 17 Rhe1+ Be7 (Diagram 28)

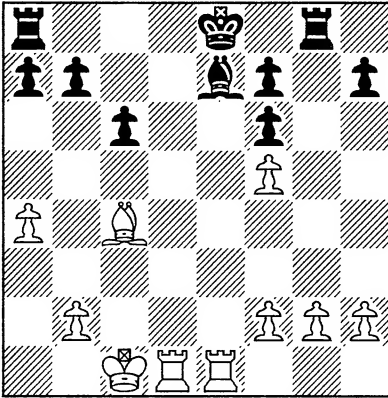


Diagram 28 (W)

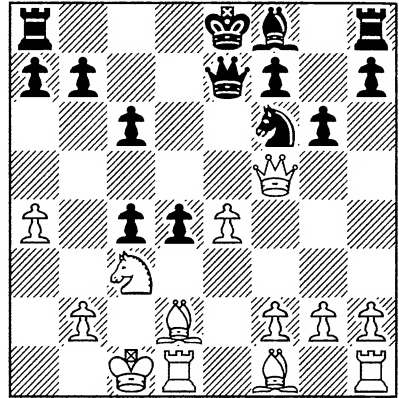


Diagram 29 (W)

Now with 18...Rd8 next up if needed, White can't exploit the temporary pin down the e-file. Meanwhile, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops gives Black excellent drawing chances, such as after 18 Re4 (or 18 Rd4 Rd8 19 Rh4 Rg7, and it's not at all clear how White can increase the pressure, while Black will unravel with 20...Rd7 and then ...Kf8 or ...Kd8-c7) 18...Rd8 19 Rde1 Rd7 20 g4 Kf8 21 Kc2 Bc5 and Black untangles with ...Kg7.

A22) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bg4 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxg4 Nxg4 8 e4 e5 9 Qxg4 exd4 10 Bd2 Nf6 11 Qf5 Qe7 12 0-0-0 g6! (Diagram 29)

Abandoning my databases for the library turned up this stronger move, as well as a pretty high-level game, namely S.Furman-T.Giorgadze, USSR 1969 (quoted in Ribli's monograph on the Slav):

13 Qg5

By no means forced, although after 13 Qf4 dxc3 14 Bxc3 Bg7 15 Bxc4 Nh5! 16 Qd6 Qxd6 17 Rxd6 Bxc3 18 bxc3 Rd8, Black should be fairly happy: his superior structure gives him chances to try and win this roughly level endgame.

13...h6!

Kicking the queen seems best, whereas 13...Bg7?! 14 Nb1 h6 15 Qa5 c3 16 bxc3 Nxe4 17 cxd4, while not totally clear, probably doesn't give Black enough for the piece.

14 Qa5

A little risky and I had initially rejected this line for Black due to 14 Qh4!? dxc3 15 Bxc3 Bg7 16 Bxc4 0-0? 17 e5 Nd5 18 Qxe7 Nxe7 19 Rd7, with some advantage, but Black can improve by inserting ...g5. Following the immediate 14...g5!? 15 Qh3! (15 Qg3 dxc3 16 Bxc3 Bg7 is much less testing) 15...dxc3 16 Bxc3 Bg7 17 Bxc4 0-0, the position isn't at all clear with both king positions somewhat weakened, while Black's ideas include ...Qc5 and ...b5.

14...b6 15 Qa6 dxc3 16 Bxc3 Bg7 17 Bxc4

17 Qxc4!? 0-0 18 f3 is a safer option, although I still slightly prefer Black due to his superior attacking options.

17...0-0 (Diagram 30)

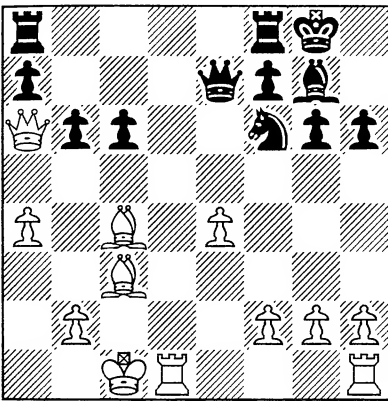


Diagram 30 (W)

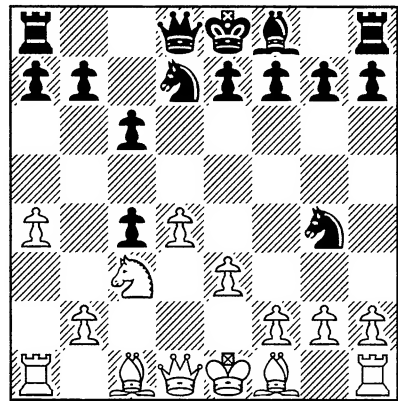


Diagram 31 (B)

Giorgadze has regained the piece and got his king to safety, with a good game. Indeed, Ribli stops here with an assessment of clearly better for Black, no doubt due to the attack on e4 and the point that 18 f3 Nd7 (18...Nh5!? 19 Bxg7 Kxg7 is a decent, much more positional alternative), threatens to trap White's queen. However, the machine points out that White can somehow get out of jail with the remarkable 19 Qb7! Bxc3 20 Rxd7 Qg5+ 21 Kc2 Bg7!? (or 21...Qxg2+ 22 Kxc3 Qxf3+ 23 Kc2 Qxh1 24 Rxf7, forcing a draw) 22 Rhd1! (and not 22 Rd2? Qc5, with some advantage due to White's much more exposed king) 22...Qxg2+ 23 R1d2 Qxf3 24 Rxf7! (a lot better than 24 Bxf7+? Kh8 25 Bxg6 Qf6 26 Bf5 Qxb2+ 27 Kd1 Qa1+ 28 Ke2 Rae8, when Black has much the stronger attack) 24...Qxe4+ 25 Kb3, and Black can do no more than draw after 25...Kh8 26 Rxg7 Rf3+ 27 Bd3 Rxd3+ 28 Rxd3 Qxd3+.

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bg4 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxg4 Nxg4 8 e3 (Diagram 31)

The prudent approach. This does give White reasonable chances of an edge, but that should not put Black off 6...Nbd7. Not just because thus far in practice Line A has been chosen somewhat more often, but also because Black's position is both very Slav-like and pretty resilient after 8 e3.

8...Ngf6 9 Bxc4 e6



BEWARE: Black should develop by analogy with the 5...Bf5 6 e3 e6 variation, rather than fall for 9...e5? 10 Qb3, with a nasty double attack.

After the text Black is pretty solid, but I suspect that objectively White may well have a small edge: a factor possibly confirmed by his statistics of +1 =7 -0.

10 0-0

White's only victory thus far in this line was actually obtained with 10 a5!?, but following 10...b5! 11 axb6 axb6 12 Bd2 Bd6 13 Rc1 0-0 14 0-0 Nd5 (14...b5!? 15 Bd3 Nb6 is another decent approach) 15 Be2, Black was not doing so badly in V.Ikonnikov-M.Kekelidze, Untergrombach 1998, and could have kept White's small edge very much within manageable bounds with the solid 15...N7f6.

10...Bb4 (Diagram 32)

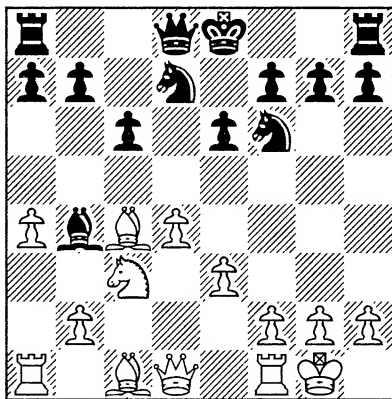


Diagram 32 (W)

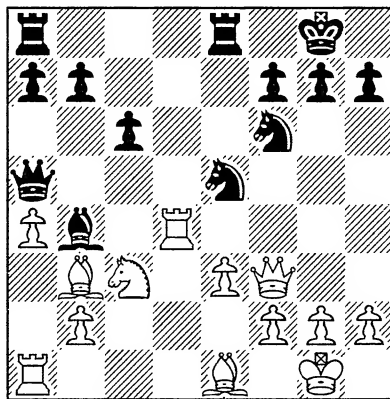


Diagram 33 (W)

11 Qb3

This is a bit of a pseudo-aggressive move and I wonder whether White might not get more mileage from some of his alternatives:

a) 11 Na2?! just loses time and 11...Be7 (preparing ...e5 with 11...Bd6!? also looks pretty logical) 12 Bd2 0-0 13 Nc3 e5! 14 Qf3 exd4 15 exd4 Nb6 left the IQP already under awkward fire in N.Moyse-K.Smallbone, Oxford (rapid) 2005.

b) 11 Bd2 0-0 12 Ne4!? Bxd2 13 Nxf6+ Nxf6 14 Qxd2 gives White a bishop versus knight advantage, but this doesn't seem to be too much of a problem for Black in this variation: his solid structure keeps the bishop at bay and it is not so easy for White to advance his central pawns. That said, it is still a small surprise that P.Clarke-L.Day, Wijk aan Zee 1970, was agreed drawn after the further moves 14...c5!? 15 Rfd1, as 15...Rc8 16 Rac1 Qe7 is by no means a dead draw.

c) 11 Qf3 0-0 12 Rd1 Qa5 13 Bd2 e5 14 Be1 Rfe8 15 Bb3 exd4 16 Rxd4 Ne5 (**Diagram 33**) 17 Qf5 c5 18 Rdd1 Rad8 was a model of how to break in the centre as Black in P.Lehtivaara-J.Henderson, British League 1999. For those not familiar with the closely related 5...Bf5 6 e3 e6 variation, note both Black's good use of the b4-outpost and White's problems getting his dark-squared bishop into the game.

d) 11 e4!? is yet to be tested, perhaps because 11...Nb6 12 Bb3 Bxc3 13 bxc3 Nxe4 14 Qf3 (as White would like to prevent Black from castling, maybe 14 Ba3!? might be tried, but is there really enough for two pawns after 14...Nxc3 15 Qc2 Ncd5 16 a5 Nc8! 17 a6 Qd7 18 axb7 Qxb7 19 Rab1 Qd7 with 20...Nce7 next up?) 14...Nd6 15 a5 Nd5 doesn't give White more than some general compensation with his bishop-pair.

11...Qb6 (Diagram 34)

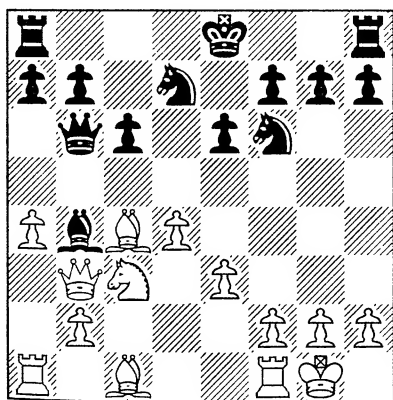


Diagram 34 (W)

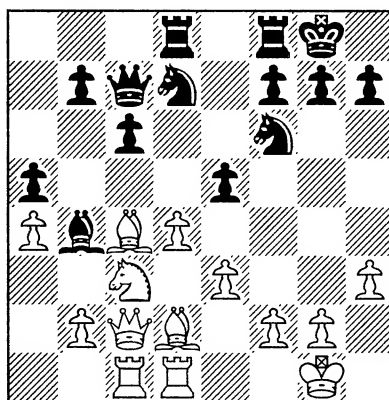


Diagram 35 (W)

12 Bd2

Hodgson has twice faced 12 Rd1 and emerged with easy draws on both occasions: 12...0-0 13 Bd2 Qa5 (as in our main line, 13...a5!? is another way of handling the

position) 14 Be1 Rad8 (getting ready to break with ...e5, whereas 14...Nb6 15 Be2 Kh8 16 Bf3 Rad8 17 e4 gave White more of a free hand in the centre, not that it was so easy for him to do anything there, in Z.Ribli-J.Hodgson, German League 2000) 15 Ne4 Bxe1 16 Nxf6+ was agreed drawn in K.Arke11-J.Hodgson, Scarborough 2001, because Black would be extremely solidly placed after 16...Nxf6 17 Rxe1 Rd7.

12...a5

Cementing Black's control over the b4-square. This enables the queen to stay on b6, thereby making it even harder for White to arrange e3-e4.

13 Rac1 0-0 14 Rfd1 Qc7 15 h3 Rad8 16 Qc2

We've been following the game A.Seixas-F.Faco Gome, correspondence 1993, and now I can't see anything wrong with the thematic break 16...e5! (**Diagram 35**).

Conclusion

I must admit that when I was first introduced to the Hodgson-Smallbone Variation, I wondered if it wasn't just a rather well-disguised trap. The piece sacrifice is great fun for Black, but isn't he just going to be worse after 8 e3? Perhaps he is a touch, but the resulting middlegames are no worse than many lines of the closely-related 5...Bf5 6 e3 e6 system. Indeed, those with some experience of that variation should especially find this a useful and dangerous addition to their repertoire.

Chapter Seven

The a-pawn Abstention

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4
g5 9 exf6 gxh4 10 Ne5 Qxf6 11 g3!? (Diagram 1)

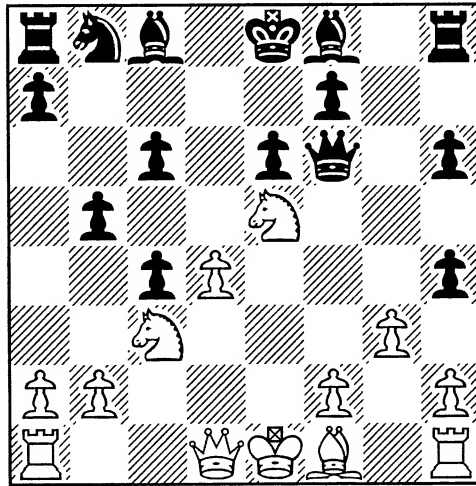


Diagram 1 (B)

Although this dangerous weapon appears on move 11, a little later after kick-off than many readers might prefer, that number is deceptively high given the amount of forced moves that have occurred before our starting position above.

Against Black's choice of the Semi-Slav, White has employed the typical developing move but nevertheless very sharp 5 Bg5. Black might take play into a Queen's Gambit Declined with 5...Be7 or 5...Nbd7, but his most principled moves are 5...dxc4, the so-called Botvinnik system, and 5...h6, the Moscow Variation and the subject of our next chapter.

In the Botvinnik, after 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5, undoubtedly the most common continuation is 9 Nxf5 when Black should choose between 9...hxg5 10 Bxg5 Nbd7 and the equally tactical 9...Nd5 10 Nxf7 Qxh4. I can recall investing many an hour studying those lines as White, both trying to learn the then current theory and adding my own input. However, despite that being at a period of my life when I was playing my most competitive chess, I didn't face the Botvinnik once in three years! Indeed when someone did eventually offer these variations I couldn't remember anything and promptly baled out into a quieter line!

The first obvious advantage of adopting the weapon detailed in this chapter is that it avoids the necessity of having to memorize oodles of textbook variations, and it also gives White a theoretical head start! Indeed, not only is 9 exf6 a relative sideline, but within that so is 9...gxh4 10 Ne5 Qxf6 11 g3!?

In strict contrast to my three year wilderness in the Botvinnik Semi-Slav, amazingly just a matter of days after I agreed to contribute towards this book, my next game of chess offered me the chance to put my money where my mouth is! Well I've never been one to shirk a challenge, even though I hadn't yet done any of the study that you will find in the 'Looking a Little Deeper' section. I had only vaguely known of White's idea and cast a quick eye over one or two games.

□ C.Ward ■ J.Moore

British League 2007

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 exf6 gxh4 10 Ne5

Note that not only is 10...Nd7? prohibited because of what would be a hanging c6-pawn, but even more importantly, White has a serious threat in the form of 11 Nxf7! (**Diagram 2**).

Yes, 11...Kxf7? 12 Qh5+ would force either mate or skewer Black's king and queen after 12...Kxf6 13 Qxh4+.

10...Qxf6

Putting a stop to White's threat.

11 g3!?

The main continuation here and one that I have played on a few occasions myself is 11 a4. That aims to put the black queenside under immediate pressure and although I am advocating 11 g3!? here, the a-pawn advance is most certainly not off

the agenda for good and, indeed, should always be on White's mind. Another idea is 11 Be2, intending Bf3 to hit the c6-pawn (and by taking advantage of it being pinned, threatening Nxb5), but the advantage of our chosen system is that even in the very short run, the e2-square is kept vacant.

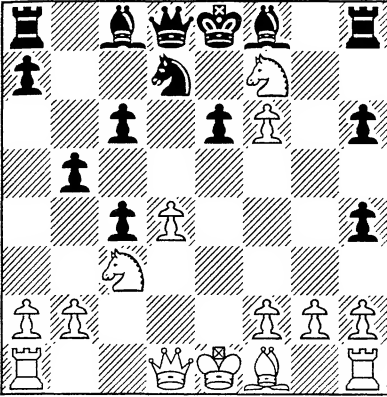


Diagram 2 (B)

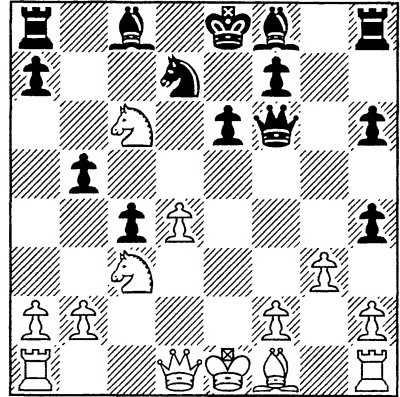


Diagram 3 (B)

The most pertinent idea behind 11 g3!? is to fianchetto the king's bishop in order to create the queenside threats that I have just mentioned, but another interesting feature is that White's g-pawn and Black's h-pawn come into direct conflict. It is unlikely that Black will want to trade pawns before White has castled as that may provide the h1-rook with options along what would be a half-open h-file. However, after kingside castling an fxc3 recapture might embarrass Black down the f-file and so typically the tension remains for a long time. Black may look to throw in a timely ...h3 to disrupt White's plans, while gxh4 may be a future possibility if White feels that he can put an open g-file to better use than his opponent.

11...Nd7!?

Black's main move, challenging White's dominant central knight.

12 Nxc6 (Diagram 3)



ROLL THE DICE! I have already told you that when I played this game I hadn't done any real study on this variation, but I had noticed a 100% score with this rather provocative and greedy move! It reduces the pawn deficit to one and leaves the b5-pawn en prise, but whilst it keeps pieces on, it obviously asks for trouble along the a8-h1 diagonal.

I must confess that this 100% score was based on just one game, but despite being

unprepared (something that you now won't be!), I knew that from here on that it would be just me against my opponent, whom I knew from previous experience was a pretty booked-up competitor.

My main analysis, below, covers the bolstering 12 Qe2 and so I guess you could consider 12 Nxc6 'a dangerous weapon within a dangerous weapon'!

12...Bb7 13 Bg2 Bb4

There is no better motivation to studying a variation than to have it in a real game and although I wasn't certain where I was going to move my bishop in the event of 13...h3, while waiting for my opponent to move most of my time was being invested in the position after 13...Rc8 14 d5.

The game that I had previously observed ended rather dramatically after 14...Bxc6 15 dxc6 Ne5 16 0-0 Nxc6 17 Nxb5 (**Diagram 4**) and now with 18 Nxa7 and 18 Qa4 serious threats, Black blundered with 17...e5? in H.Teske-N.Friedrich, Arco 2006. Obviously he overlooked 18 Bh3! which, bearing in mind Nc7+ and then Nd5+ ideas, provoked resignation! Regarding that, there is no doubt in my mind that White had very good play, but while Black was clearly worried about the e-file becoming open, at the board I was trying to pinpoint something concrete in the event of 14...exd5! (**Diagram 5**):

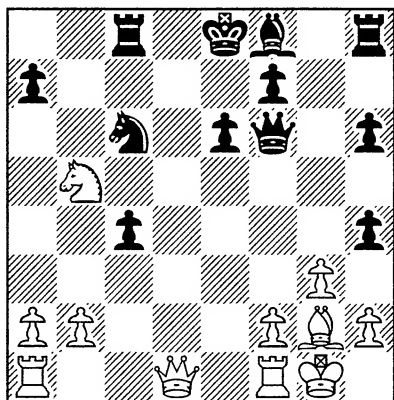


Diagram 4 (B)

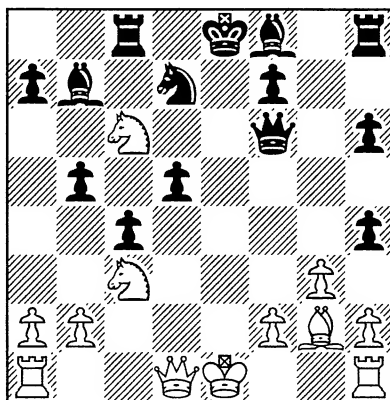


Diagram 5 (W)

a) I could see 15 Nxd5 Qxc6 16 0-0 being the sort of sacrifice that you might find in an Open Sicilian, but I didn't really believe it.

b) 15 Nxa7 Bc5! 16 Qe2+ Kd8 17 Nxc8 is, of course, foiled by 17...Re8.

c) Based on the variation 15 Qe2+ Qe6 16 Nxa7 b4!? 17 Nxc8 (17 Nxd5 Rc5 leaves the white knights in a bit of a pickle) 17...bxc3 18 bxc3, I would have to conclude that probably the best that White can expect is an endgame like 18...hxg3 19 hxg3

Bxc8 20 Bxd5 Qxe2+ 21 Kxe2, in which he has a rook and a pawn for two pieces. That's not ideal and possibly of more concern is the cheeky deviation 18...Bc5 19 Rb1 Bc6!?, with which Black intends picking up the trapped white knight with his rook or king and without dropping the d5-pawn.

Thus the conclusion must be that 12 Nxc6 is definitely worthy of its dice tag. If your opponent doesn't capture on d5, then the chances are that you are doing pretty well, but if he does, well let's move on!

Although 13...Rc8 is obviously critical, Black's selection of 13...Bb4 certainly was an obvious alternative, particularly for a more solid player who didn't fancy leaving his a-pawn en prise and getting involved in the complications. My natural response effectively unpins both knights at the same time and Black is now forced to make a trade that he would rather not have to.

14 0-0 (Diagram 6)

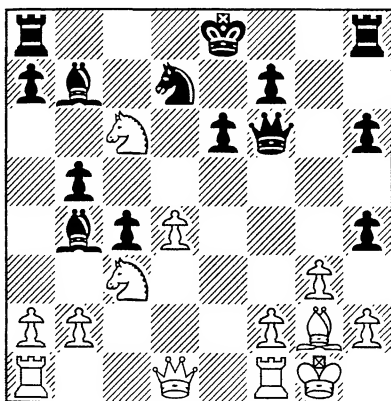


Diagram 6 (B)

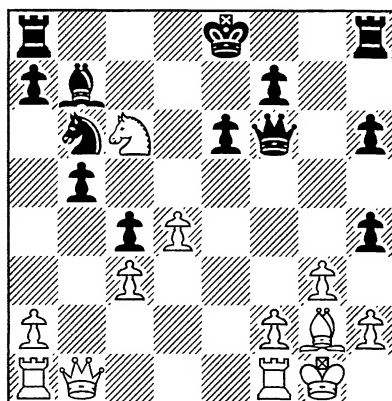


Diagram 7 (B)

14...Bxc3

This allows White to improve his pawn structure, but the bishop was attacked and the c3-knight was looking to hop into e4 as well as to capture on b5.

15 bxc3 Nb6

The result of White's last is that the d4-pawn has been bolstered and that the b-file has become a potential source of action for a white rook or two. Black's choice can be easily understood by looking at 15...0-0 16 a4! a6 17 Qh5 when he cannot keep his queenside together.

16 Qb1! (Diagram 7)

I was pretty pleased with this move which intends to meet 16...a6 with 17 a4!, ex-

Dangerous Weapons: The Queen's Gambit

plotting Black's vulnerable pieces down the b-file.

16...h3 17 Be4

In truth it was a toss up between this and 17 Bh1, and either way I was happy with my position.

17...0-0

I had intended to meet 17...a6 with 18 a4, but rather than get involved in that, Black opted to allow material equality to be re-established by getting his king out of the potential firing line.

18 Qxb5 Rab8

At the time I felt that 18...Rfc8 19 Rae1 (or 19 Rfe1) 19...Bxc6 20 Bxc6 Rab8 was more testing, but White still stands better and so long as the muddle of the queen and bishop is sorted out, White's structural advantages should prove decisive.

19 Qh5!?

I definitely wanted to avoid 19 Nxb8 Bxe4, but now the availability of Qg4+ means that Black does have to worry about losing the exchange.

19...Bxc6 20 Bxc6 Rfc8 21 Be4 (Diagram 8)

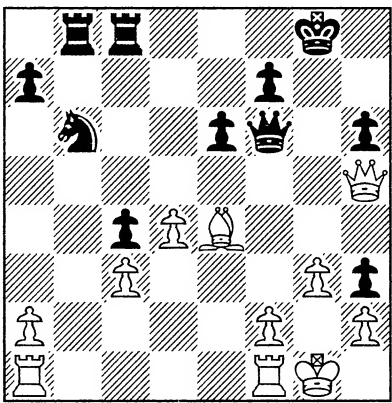


Diagram 8 (B)

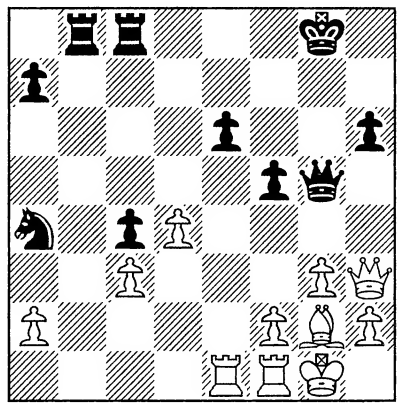


Diagram 9 (B)

With h3 loose, I could easily soon be a pawn up. Furthermore, White has the superior minor piece, but still needs to be careful as Black's rooks could find themselves very well placed if he is given time to pick off the c3-pawn.

21...Qg5

Annoyingly for Black, the immediate 21...Na4 is easily thwarted by 22 Qa5 when after 22...Nb2, the simple 23 Qxa7 leaves Black with nothing to do.

22 Qxh3

Although theoretically a queen and knight are the most deadly attacking force, with the black steed languishing on the queenside, it is White who is threatening to mount an offensive with f4-f5. Black opts to intercept that plan, but in doing so creates further weaknesses.

22...f5 23 Bg2

Again I had a tough time choosing between the various bishop options as they all looked good.

23...Na4 24 Rae1! (Diagram 9)

Rather than defend c3, I was more than happy to go on the offensive and my decision was soon vindicated.

24...Nxc3 25 Rxe6 h5 26 Bf3!

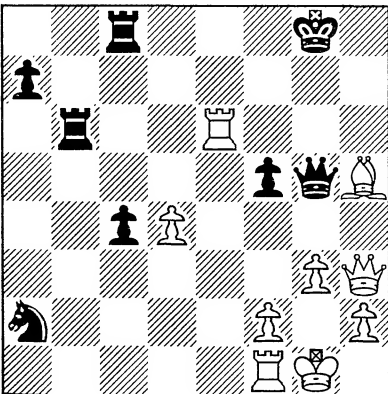
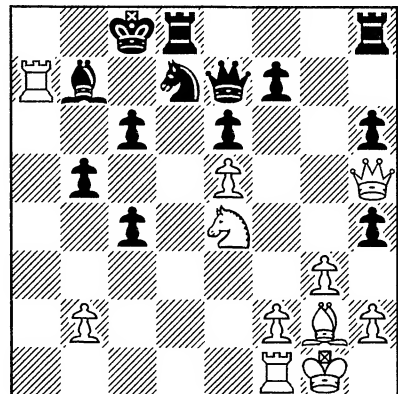
While this obviously attacks h5, another important point behind it was to prevent a queen trade that could come with ...Qg4. In such an instance Black's passed c-pawn could become a serious problem.

26...Nxa2

Upon 26...h4, I was going to respond with 27 Kh1!? when, with reference to my earlier notes, a very serious idea is gxh4, after which Black's king will suffer down the open g-file.

27 Bxh5

The obvious threat is the queen-winning 28 Rg6+, although other tactics are very much in the equation and Black is suddenly being served his last rites.

27...Rb6 (Diagram 10)**Diagram 10 (W)****Diagram 11 (B)**

28 Bg6!! Qxg6

It's desperate stuff, but White's key point was 28...Rxe6 29 Qh7+ Kf8 30 Qf7 mate.

29 Rxxg6+ Rxxg6 30 Qxf5 Rgc6

Black is clinging to his passed c-pawn, but his army of pieces are all over the shop, especially considering the role about to be played by White's own passed pawn!

31 d5 Rc5 32 Qe6+ Kg7 33 d6 1-0

Okay, that might be a nice instructive game, but let's now knuckle down to the real work by taking a look at what I consider to be the main lines.

Looking a Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 c6 3 c4 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 exf6 gxh4 10 Ne5 Qxf6 11 g3 Nd7

Black's main and best move. The alternatives fail to convince:

a) 11...Bb7 12 Bg2 Bd6 (now 13 Ne4 is a tempting fork, but White must remember that Black still has the check on b4 at his disposal) 13 0-0 Qe7 (observe that upon 13...Bxe5, White can flick in 14 Ne4!, after which 15 dxe5 will create an opportunity to invade on d6) 14 a4 a6 15 Ne4 Nd7 16 Qh5!? Bxe5 17 dxe5 0-0-0 18 axb5 axb5 (18...cxb5? drops a piece to 19 Nd6+) 19 Ra7 (**Diagram 11**) saw White's pressure well worth the material sacrificed in S.Bertrem-C.Hafner, Belgian League 2007, which concluded convincingly: 19...Kb8 20 Rfa1 Nb6 21 Nd6 Rd7 22 Qf3 Rf8 23 Rxb7+ Rxb7 24 Qxc6 Nd5 25 Nxb7 Rc8 (or 25...Qxb7 26 Qd6+) 26 Ra8+ Kxa8 27 Qxc8+ Ka7 28 Nd6 1-0.

b) 11...a6 12 Bg2 Ra7 13 0-0 Rc7 overprotects the weakness on c6. Here materialistic computer analysis engines are unlikely to be too encouraging with White still two pawns in arrears, but he does have a huge development advantage and what to do with that was well highlighted by 14 Re1 hxg3 15 hxg3 Qd8 16 d5! cxd5 17 Nxd5 in A.Pashikian-T.Kotanjian, Yerevan 2007. Indeed, it is only after 17...Rb7 18 Nxc4 bxc4 19 Qd4 that *Fritz* starts to admit that it might have been mistaken and 19...Rb5 20 Rad1 Rxd5 21 Bxd5 Rg8 22 Bxe6! Qxd4 23 Bxc8+ Kd8 24 Rxd4+ Kxc8 25 Re8+ Kc7 26 Rxc4+ Nc6 27 b4 Kd7 28 Ra8 Ne5 29 Rcc8 Ng6 30 Rc4 Ne5 31 Re4 f6 32 a4 Kc7 33 Rxa6 Bd6 34 Kg2 Rb8 35 f4 Nf7 36 b5 Kb7 37 Re6 1-0 surely proves that it was!

Returning to 11...Nd7:

12 Qe2 (Diagram 12)

White's strongest approach and now Black has three main possibilities:

A: 12...Nxe5

B: 12...c5

C: 12...Bb7

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 exf6 gxh4 10 Ne5 Qxf6 11 g3 Nd7 12 Qe2 Nxe5

Although Black may not desire the d-file being opened or White getting a foothold on the f6- and d6-squares, this is, of course, the most fireproof method of ensuring that White's knight no longer causes any grief!

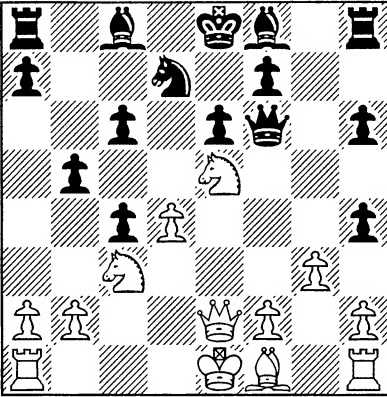


Diagram 12 (B)

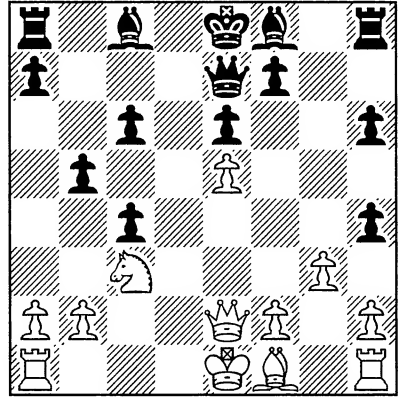


Diagram 13 (W)

13 dxe5

Now, however, White's remaining knight may look to join in the action via e4 and Black needs to make a decision about where to move his queen:

A1: 13...Qe7

A2: 13...Qd8

A3: 13...Qf5

A1) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 exf6 gxh4 10 Ne5 Qxf6 11 g3 Nd7 12 Qe2 Nxe5 13 dxe5 Qe7 (Diagram 13)

The most popular retreat, probably because the queen is now safe from enemy attack and will offer protection to the light-squared bishop when it is called to b7 to defend the c6-pawn.

14 Bg2

This is very logical, but I must confess to being intrigued too by the 14 0-0-0!? Bg7 15 f4 Bb7 16 Ne4 0-0 17 Qg4 of J.Hotari-H.Filen, correspondence 1983. Essentially, White has held back on Bg2 in favour of a direct assault. I suspect that Black

should unpin here with 17...Kh8 or challenge the d-file by putting a rook on d8. Instead in the game he sought some action of his own via 17...c3, but now the forcing 18 Rd7! cxb2+ 19 Kb1 Qb4 20 Bd3! Bc8 21 f5! (**Diagram 14**) would have given White an overwhelming attack.

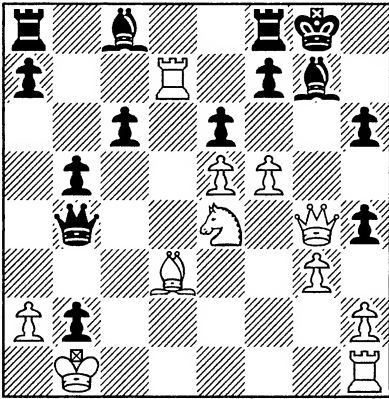


Diagram 14 (B)

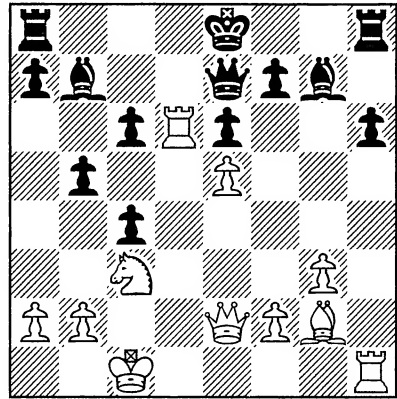


Diagram 15 (B)

14...Bb7 15 0-0-0

15 0-0 Bg7 16 f4 is an alternative route to take, but the dual purpose (i.e. tucking the king away and bringing a rook straight to the open d-file) of queenside castling makes it the more attractive.

15...Bg7

Instead 15...h3 16 Bxh3 Bg7 17 f4 0-0 18 Rd6 b4 19 Ne4 c5 20 Rhd1 Rad8 21 Qxc4 Bxe4 (21...Bd5 22 R1xd5 exd5 23 Qxd5 would be a very valid exchange sacrifice) 22 Qxe4 left White with a superior opposite-coloured bishop middlegame scenario in A.Rychagov-V.Zakharstov, Tula 2000.

16 Rd6!?

Offering another pawn is far from forced and indeed I suspect that 16 f4 should also be good for White: for example, 16...0-0 (16...Rd8 17 Rxd8+ Kxd8 18 Qe3! Ba8 19 Rd1+ Kc8 20 Rd6 Rd8 21 Bxc6 was horrible for Black in E.Solozhenkin-D.Van Eekhout, Ghent 2004) 17 Rd6 Rfd8 (it might be argued that 17...Rad8 is more accurate; however, White can probably just play in the same way by doubling rooks, parking his knight on e4 and advancing any passed d-pawn to d7 to tie Black down) 18 Rhd1 Rxd6 19 exd6 Qd8 20 d7 Qa5 21 f5! e5 22 Ne4 Rd8 23 f6 Bh8 24 Qg4+ Kf8 25 Qxh4 Qxa2 26 Qxh6+ Kg8 27 Nc3 and the threat of 28 Be4 was decisive in M.Lacrosse-A.Viaene, Vlissingen 2005.

As you will soon see, though, the text has a certain attraction too.

16...hxg3 17 hxg3 (Diagram 15) 17...b4!?

The reason that 16 f4 has been favoured in practice is that Black can now net another pawn via 17...Qg5+ 18 f4 (obviously White wants to retain the e5-pawn) 18...Qxg3. However, then 19 Qd2 defends the f4-pawn and seriously threatens Rd7 and Ne4. Following 19...b4 20 Ne4 c3 (desperately trying to gain some counterplay; Black can eliminate 20...Qg4 21 Rd7 as 21...Bc8 allows mate in two with 22 Rd8+ and 23 Qd6, while 21...Ba6 22 Qd6! Qxf4+ 23 Kb1 Bf8, amongst other things, allows the juicy finish 24 Rd8+ Rxd8 25 Nf6+ Qxf6 26 Bxc6+) 21 bxc3 bxc3 22 Nxc3, nothing works for Black and 22...0-0 23 Rd3 Qg6 24 Ne4 c5 25 Rg3 shows that his king is never safe! Thus we can appreciate the idea of 17...b4, which is to force the white knight further away from the dominant e4-post.

18 Na4

Unfortunately for Black, the knight can still return to e4 from c5; a square which offers several benefits of its own to a white knight.

18...Qg5+ 19 f4 Qxg3 20 Qd2 0-0

Play transposes to the note to Black's 17th after 20...c3.

21 Rh3!

All of White's pieces want a piece of the action and they are going to get it!

21...Qg6 22 Nc5 Bc8 23 Qf2!

Sidestepping any ...c3 counterplay attempts, and more pertinently bringing the idea of Rg3 into the equation.

23...Rb8 24 Rg3 Qh7

Note that 24...Qh5 25 Bf3 Qh4 drops the queen to 26 Rxg7+!

25 Be4 Qh8 26 Qd4 (Diagram 16)

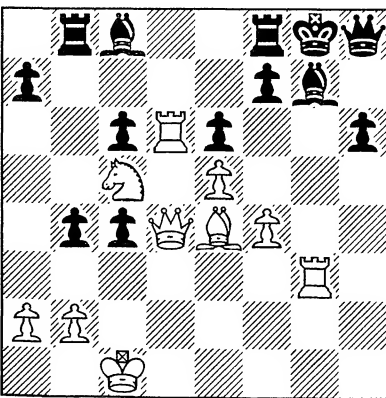


Diagram 16 (B)

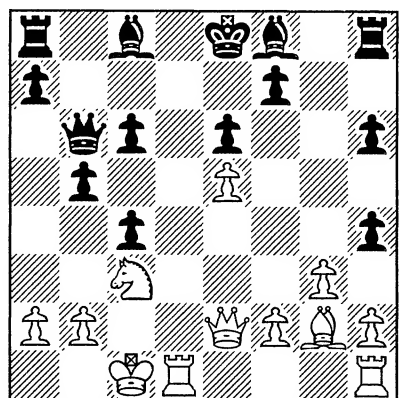


Diagram 17 (B)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! You've got to sit back and admire this position, even if it has been concocted by me through a hypothetical variation! Black is completely paralyzed and White will progress to victory after 27 Rd8.

A2) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 exf6 gxh4 10 Ne5 Qxf6 11 g3 Nd7 12 Qe2 Nxe5 13 dxe5 Qd8

Her majesty is potentially now in the firing line of a white rook, but at least White has been prevented from castling long.

14 Bg2 Bb7

Upon 14...Qb6 (defending both c6 and the pinned b5-pawn) 15 0-0-0 (**Diagram 17**), a couple of possibilities that make for instructive viewing are:

a) After 15...Be7 16 Qf3 Bb7 17 Ne4, Black tried to generate some play with 17...c3, but White ignored it and 18 Nf6+ Bxf6 19 Qxf6 cxb2+ 20 Kb1 Rg8 21 Rd6 Qc7 22 Rhd1 Rf8 23 Bf3 c5 (desperately trying to avoid being mated after 24 Bh5) 24 Bxb7 and 1-0 all seemed so simple in H.Wilshusen-W.Schubert, correspondence 1989.

b) Following 15...Bd7 16 Ne4 0-0-0, White is far from forced to rush in, but nevertheless 17 Nd6+ Bxd6 18 Rxd6 leaves him with nice control for what almost unbelievably is still two pawns. Black is very tied up and although he might have defended better, 18...Be8 19 Rhd1 Rxd6 20 Rxd6 Rg8 21 Qf3 hxg3 22 hxg3 Rg6 23 Qf4 Qc5 24 Bxc6 Bxc6 25 Qxf7 c3 26 b4 Qc4 27 Qxg6 Qf1+ 28 Rd1 Qxf2 29 Qxe6+ Kb7 30 Qb3 Qe3+ 31 Kb1 c2+ 32 Kxc2 Qxe5 33 Qc3 Qe6 34 Kb2 left White with a winning endgame in G.Haigh-F.Silva, Skopje Olympiad 1972.

15 0-0!

If White is concerned about the pawn count, it is possible to regain one immediately with 15 Nxb5, but that's a trade-off as after 15...h3 16 Bf3 Qa5+ 17 Nc3 Bg7 18 0-0 Qxe5 19 Qxc4 0-0, Black would no longer be under serious pressure.

15...Qc7 16 Rad1

Now the black king won't be castling queenside and it will feel very nervous finding a resting place on the kingside. White's simple plan is now 17 Ne4-f6+.

16...Rd8 (Diagram 18)

After 16...Be7 17 Qh5! the black king will be stuck in the middle, while Ne4-d6+ remains very much in the equation.

17 Rxd8+

This seems the most straightforward, but another idea is to support the e5-pawn with 17 f4, possibly also with f4-f5 in mind. A rare but interesting reference from here is 17...hxg3 18 hxg3 Bc5+ 19 Kh2 h5 20 Ne4 Be7 21 Nd6+ Bxd6?! 22 exd6 Qb6 (and not 22...Rxd6? 23 Qe5, forking the two rooks) 23 f5 Kd7 24 fxe6+ fxe6 25 Qe5, with bone-crunching compensation in M.PEEK-M.Okkes, Dutch League 1996: 26

Rf7+ and 26 Bh3 are two devastating threats.

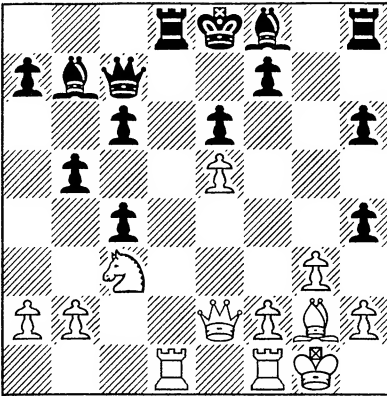


Diagram 18 (W)

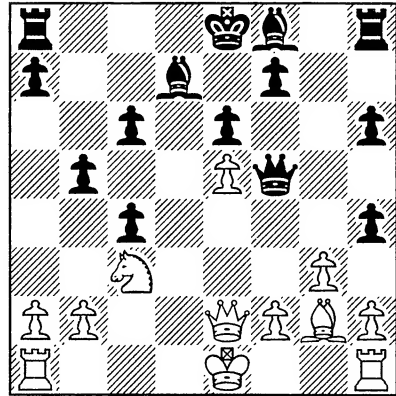


Diagram 19 (W)

17...Qxd8

Instead 17...Kxd8 18 Rd1+ would offer the black king the chance to scuttle to the queenside. White still has reasonable compensation there, but 18 Qh5!?, guarding the e5-pawn and hitting other weak points, gives Black more to think about.

18 Rd1 Qc7 19 Ne4!? Qxe5 20 Qd2 Qc7 21 Qc3



DANGEROUS WEAPON! White is now three pawns down, but he is completely winning as the combination of world domination on the d-file and the a1-h8 diagonal will cost Black a rook or more.

A3) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 exf6 gxf4 10 Ne5 Qxf6 11 g3 Nd7 12 Qe2 Nxe5 13 dxe5 Qf5 14 Bg2 Bd7 (Diagram 19) 15 0-0-0

This time 15 Nxb5 Bb4+ 16 Kf1 may actually be good for White, but instead he can continue to amass typical pressure along the d-file, possibly also seeking to exploit the slightly vulnerable position of the black queen.

15...Rd8

Faring no better was 15...0-0-0 16 Qe3! (now Black struggles to keep his queenside together) 16...Kb8 17 Bxc6! Bxc6 18 Rxd8+ Kc7 19 Rhd1 Bc5 20 Qxc5 Rxd8 21 Nxb5+ and 1-0 was suddenly mate in two in M.Molinari-M.Hofmann, German League 1991.

16 f4

Dangerous Weapons: The Queen's Gambit

This standard continuation guards the e5-pawn and, in this particular situation, White seeks to use the e4-square for both his bishop and knight.

16...h5 17 Ne4 Be7

As well as the threat of his queen being trapped, the concept of 18 Nf6+ Ke7 was unthinkable as a simple 19 Qe3-c5 would be mating.

18 Nd6+ Bxd6 19 Rxd6 Rg8

White is playing his typical d-file pressure card once again and because Black's queen has gone AWOL, 19...0-0 20 Rhd1 would see Black drop a piece.

20 Be4 Qg4 21 Qd2 (Diagram 20)

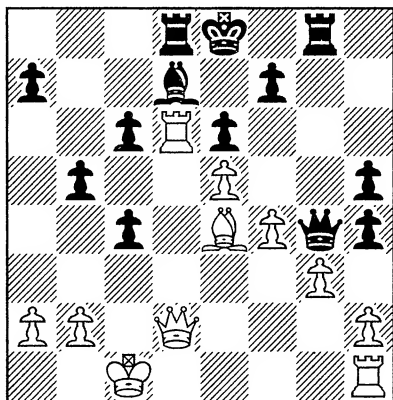


Diagram 20 (B)

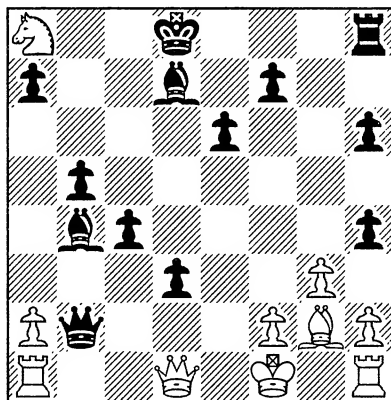


Diagram 21 (W)

White's plan is simple: pin it and win it!

21...hxg3 22 hxg3

I can see no objection to the immediate 22 Bxc6, but White is in no hurry.

22...f5 23 Rxd7! Rxd7 24 Bxc6 Rgg7 25 Rd1

And in M.Kobalia-P.Skatchkov, Sochi 1998, Black resigned not a moment too soon!

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 exf6 gxh4 10 Ne5 Qxf6 11 g3 Nd7 12 Qe2 c5

With this challenging advance, Black logically seeks to undermine the key defender of White's central knight. Mind you, it is not without risk as not only is the b5-pawn en prise, but Black is now vulnerable along the h1-a8 diagonal.

13 Nc6!



BEWARE! White must be careful here and should not underestimate the counterplay that Black can build up with a big pawn centre.

A good example of such danger was the game N.Murshed-V.Ivanchuk, Sharjah 1985: 13 Bg2?! (rather casual) 13...cxd4 14 Nxd7 Bxd7 15 Nd5 Qg7 16 Nc7+ Kd8 17 Nxa8, and now White was a rook up, but 17...Bb4+ 18 Kf1 d3 19 Qd1 Qxb2 (**Diagram 21**) gave Black a frightening pawn-chain. Adding to that the fact that Black has an excellent bishop-pair, while White has a dreadfully placed knight, it should be no surprise that Black went on to win.

Moreover, although there isn't much theory at all on this whole 11 g3 variation, what little there is implies that 13 Qe4 (which has been given an exclamation) 13...cxd4! 14 Nxd7 Kxd7 15 Qxa8 dxc3 16 Qxa7+ Ke8 (**Diagram 22**) and now 17 Bg2 is winning for White, but as far as I can see 17...Qe5+! 18 Kf1 Bc5 is actually winning for Black!

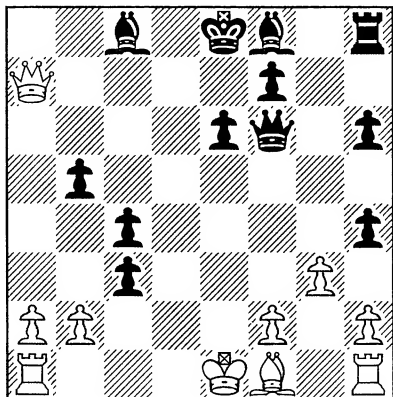


Diagram 22 (W)

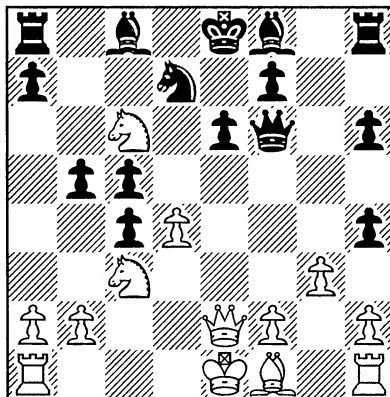


Diagram 23 (B)

Instead 17 Qb8 improves, preparing to halt Black's pawns after 17...cxb2 18 Qxc8+ Qd8 19 Qxd8+ Kxd8 20 Rb1 c3 21 Bd3 b4, not that this is so clear, but Black also has 17...Qf3!? 18 Qxc8+ Ke7 19 Rg1 (definitely not 19 Rd1?? Qe4+ 20 Be2 Qxh1+ 21 Bf1 Qe4+ 22 Be2 Kf6) 19...Qe4+ 20 Be2 cxb2 21 Rd1 Kf6 22 Qd8+ Kg7 23 gxh4+ Kh7 24 Qf6 Rg8, which leaves him suddenly better. I doubt that White should really lose here, but I haven't been able to come up with anything particularly good for him earlier in this sequence.

Returning to the correct 13 Nc6 (**Diagram 23**):

13...Bb7

As far as I can make out, the only real way that Black can play without sacrificing his queen is 13...e5, but after 14 d5 Bb7 15 Bg2 b4 16 Nb5 Bd6 17 f4! the complications favoured White in A.Rychagov-S.Klimov, St Petersburg 2001. It is also useful to note that something like 13...cxd4? 14 Nd5 Qg7 fails rather comprehensively to the visual 15 Nc7 mate!

14 Nd5

As this knight attacks Black's queen and threatens mate, Black is forced to concede his queen but he does get a not unreasonable (sorry, I like my double negatives!) amount of material for it.

14...Bxc6 15 Nxf6+ Nxf6 16 d5! (Diagram 24)

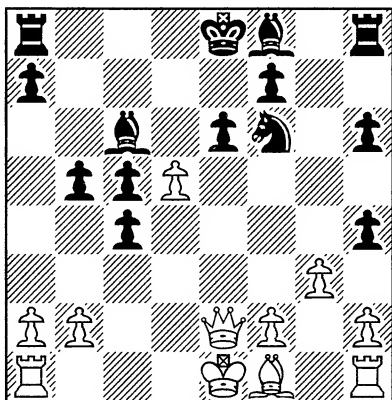


Diagram 24 (B)

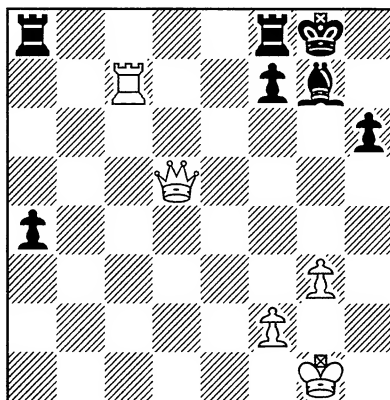


Diagram 25 (B)

I believe that this is an important intermezzo, preventing Black from building an impressive preponderance of pawns in the centre.

16...Nxd5 17 Bg2 Bg7

If Black hadn't played this, White would have taken advantage by plonking his queen on the commanding post e5. However, White is now able to take the opportunity to tackle Black's queenside pawns before his opponent has the chance to consolidate.

18 a4! 0-0

Although White may not be winning, there is little doubt that after this White has somewhat the better chances. Indeed, he has won both of the games that have reached this position and it is interesting that neither black player has felt comfortable about taking further time out to try and keep their queenside pawn structure together with 18...a6.

Essentially, the situation is that Black has two pieces and three pawns for the

queen, but the three pawns aren't the greatest and he could suffer for not having the shelter that a g-pawn would offer.

19 axb5 Bxb5 20 0-0 a6 21 Qh5

Black is quite solid on the queenside, but his majority is going nowhere fast and White ultimately has it in mind to turn his opponent over on the kingside.

21...c3 22 bxc3 Bxf1 23 Rxf1 hgx3 24 hxg3 c4 25 Bxd5 exd5 26 Qxd5 a5 27 Re1 Bxc3 28 Re4 Bg7 29 Rxc4 a4 30 Rc7 (Diagram 25)

I'm going to stop my main commentary here, but I do feel that it would be very instructive for the reader to play through the rest of the game N.Vitiugov-J.Geller, Cheboksary 2006. You will observe how the passed a-pawn is never a serious threat and how the constant tactics with Rxf7 keep Black on his toes. Were Black's h-pawn on g6 then I would suggest that surely he couldn't lose, but the half-open g-file gives White excellent winning chances. There is no need for him to be in a rush to trade off a pair of rooks, as even with them on he can march his king up the board along with his pawns to assist in a kingside attack.

30...Ra6 31 Qc4 Ra5 32 Qb4 Raa8 33 Qb7 Ra5 34 Qb4 Ra6 35 Qa3 Raa8 36 Rc4 Rfd8 37 Kg2 Rd4 38 Rc7 Rdd8 39 Qf3 Rf8 40 Rxf7 Rxf7 41 Qxa8+ Bf8 42 Qxa4 (Diagram 26)

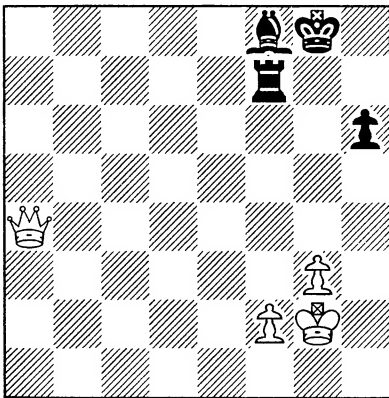


Diagram 26 (B)

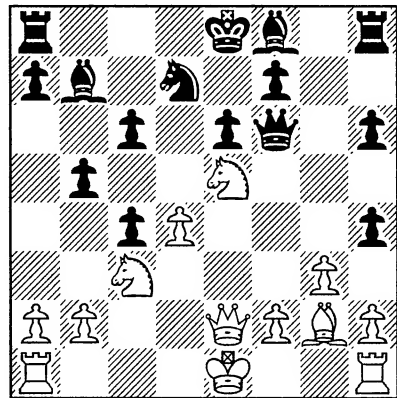


Diagram 27 (B)

42...Rf6 43 Qd7 Bd6 44 f4 Kh8 45 Kh3 Kg8 46 Kg4 Kh8 47 Kh5 Kg8 48 Qe8+ Kg7 49 Qd8 Rf5+ 50 Kg4 Rf6 51 Qd7+ Kg8 52 Kf3 Kh8 53 Ke4 Kg8 54 Qd8+ Kf7 55 Kd5 Bf8 56 Qd7+ Kg8 57 Qe8 Kh7 58 Ke4 Kg7 59 Kd5 Kh7 60 Qh5 Kg8 61 Ke4 Bd6 62 Qd5+ Kh7 63 Qb7+ Kg8 64 Kd5 Bf8 65 Qc7 Bg7 66 Ke4 Bf8 67 Qd8 Kf7 68 Kf3 Bd6 69 Qh8 Bf8 70 Qh7+ Bg7 71 Kg4 Kf8 72 Kh5 Kf7 73 Qe4 Bf8 74 g4 Bg7 75 Qd5+ Ke7 76 Qb7+ Kf8 77 g5 hxg5 78 fxg5 Re6 79 g6 Re5+ 80 Kg4 Re7 81 Qc8+ 1-0

C) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 exf6 gxh4 10 Ne5 Qxf6 11 g3 Nd7 12 Qe2 Bb7

Rather than merely guard the c6-pawn, this move is really about trying to take charge of the h1-a8 diagonal. However, White can immediately get to grips with that concept.

13 Bg2 (Diagram 27)

I think that it is better to maintain the tension than to simplify through 13 Nxd7 Kxd7 14 Bg2. I agree that White should have some compensation there because the black king is floating around, while White's bishop pressurizes Black's queen-side and his knight can dream of hopping somewhere nice. However, we should not forget that White is actually two pawns down and that Black has the bishop-pair to boot.

13...Bb4!?

Note that this position can also occur via the move order 12...Bb4 13 Bg2 Bb7. Black can also play:

- a) 13...Nxe5 14 dxe5 Qe7 is another transposition, in this case to Line A1.
- b) 13...a6 is another way of defending the b5-pawn, although after 14 0-0 Black still employed 14...Bb4 in one practical outing. However, the downside to this is that the c3-knight is free to move and 15 Ne4 Qf5 16 f4 0-0-0 17 g4 Qh7 18 a4 Qg7 19 axb5 cxb5 (Diagram 28)

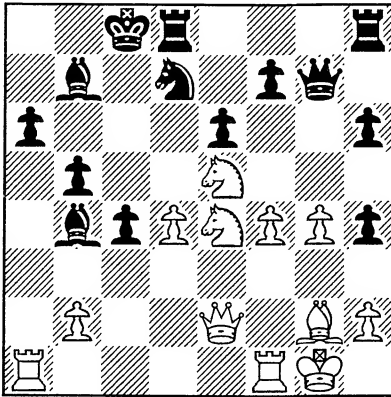


Diagram 28 (W)

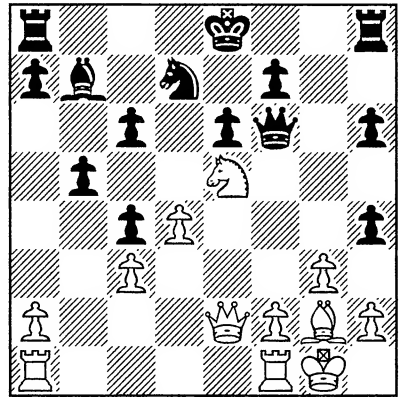


Diagram 29 (B)

20 Nd6+!! Bxd6 21 Bxb7+ Kc7 (21...Kxb7 22 Qe4+ leads to mate) 22 Qe4 Nb8 23 Bxa6 Bxe5 24 Qb7+ Kd6 and 1-0 in T.Piceu-S.Hautot, Belgian League 2003, obviously took advantage of that situation.

14 0-0

14 0-0-0!? Bxc3 15 bxc3 Rc8 16 f4 was also successful for White in one game, but the text can't really be faulted.

14...Bxc3

Without this bishop Black is vulnerable on the dark squares, but we have already seen (in note 'b' to Black's 13th) what can happen if White's knight is left free to roam after 14...a6.

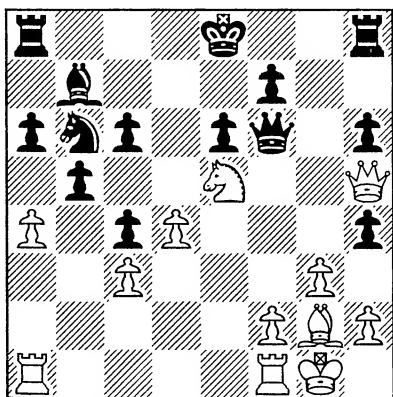
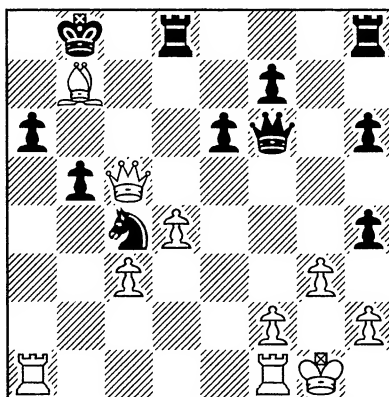
15 bxc3 (Diagram 29) 15...Nb6

Upon 15...Nxe5 16 dxe5 Qe7, White should choose between 17 Rad1 and 17 a4!?: for example, following the latter, 17...a6 18 Qe3!? 0-0-0 19 Qa7 Qc7 was seen in B.Starck-T.Gempe, German League 1995, after which 20 axb5 cxb5 21 Bxb7+ Qxb7 22 Rxa6 Qxa7 23 Rxa7 leaves White with an advantage in the double rook ending thanks to his control of the seventh rank.

Although I couldn't realistically be expected to cover them all, in this whole variation with 11 g3 there are numerous opportunities for Black to flick in ...h3 if he so desires. White generally has the choice between capturing on h3, which slows down his possible queenside pressurizing plan, and nudging the bishop elsewhere along the h1-a8 diagonal, confident in his ability if needs be to pick off the plucky intruder on h3 later in the game. Specifically here, 15...h3 16 Be4 Qe7 17 a4!? saw White ultimately successfully stick with the pressurization policy in W.Balcerowski-A.Tarnowski, Lublin 1965.

16 a4! a6

Instead 16...Nxa4 17 Rxa4! bxa4 18 Rb1 would be very awkward for Black.

17 Qh5 (Diagram 30)**Diagram 30 (B)****Diagram 31 (B)**

Very flexible. White is ready to attack the black king whichever side he chooses to castle. With the white queen hovering ominously and Ng4 in the air should Black's king opt for g8, it is no great surprise that he chooses to go long.

17...0-0-0?!

All the same, played now this should probably go down as an error as White has more than one way to guarantee an advantage.

18 axb5

I can't actually see anything wrong with the straightforward 18 Nxf7, especially as after 18...Nxa4 White can offload an exchange first himself with 19 Rxa4! bxa4 20 Nxb8 Rxb8, leaving Black with no fewer than seven isolated pawns!

18...cxb5 19 Nxc4!

Although White certainly could have contemplated options involving taking the f7-pawn, the text contains some neat ideas.

19...Nxc4

If 19...bxc4? then obviously 20 Qc5+ anyway.

20 Qc5+ Kb8 21 Bxb7 (Diagram 31) 21...Rc8

White's point was that after 21...Kxb7, he has the attractive 22 Rxa6! forcing checkmate: for example, 22...Kxa6 23 Ra1+ Na5 24 Qc6+ Ka7 25 Rxa5+ Kb8 26 Ra8 mate. As 21...Qg5 22 d5! doesn't really help matters, Black is forced to offer the exchange.

22 Bxc8 Rxc8 23 Qh5

White has accepted the material and is now the exchange up for insufficient compensation. Indeed, he went on to make the material advantage tell in the game L.Zaid-V.Buturin, Yalta 1978.

Conclusion

The weapon that I have brought to your attention in this chapter is not actually new, but 9 exf6 is a comparative side-variation within the Botvinnik Semi-Slav and 11 g3 is a sideline within that. Having combined plenty of home analysis with the minimal amount of theory already available, I have to say that I am very happy with the content of this chapter. Indeed my feeling right now is that not only is it a dangerous weapon, but for White it is simply a good idea. In truth I have not found even one line in which I am worried about White being worse and having already played 11 g3 once, I will certainly do so again!

Chapter Eight

Castling Long in Moscow

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bxf6 Qxf6 7 Qb3 dxc4 8 Qxc4 Nd7 9 0-0-0!?

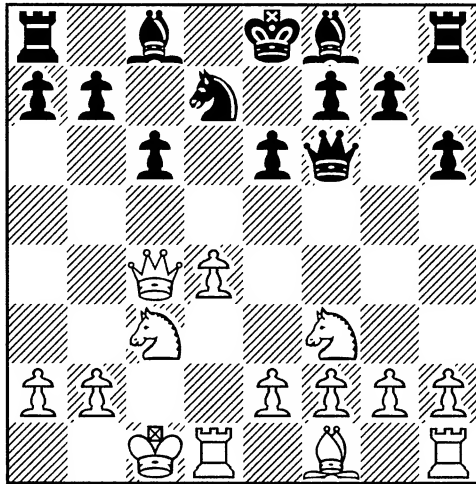


Diagram 1 (B)

The Moscow Variation is characterized by the move 5...h6. In comparatively recent times some white players have been taking on the aggressive but complicated variation 6 Bh4 dxc4 7 e4 g5 which, it should be noted, is not the same as the Bot-

vinnik system because White is forced to retreat with 8 Bg3, rather than being able to dabble in the tactics of Nxc5 hxc5; Bxc5, as he can when ...b7-b5 and e4-e5 have been included.

I believe that it is a misconception that 6 Bh4 is the aggressive way to play, whereas 6 Bxf6 only aspires to a minimal but long lasting advantage. Indeed, just because White has conceded the bishop-pair doesn't mean that he can't continue in aggressive mode! Furthermore, as Black looks most likely to go short, a mid-dlegame position involving opposite-side castling can easily occur, in which case the sparks may fly!

Despite the title of this chapter, as you will soon discover, this anti-Moscow repertoire also includes several variations in which the white king stays in the centre, as well as those in which White castles kingside and only then launches an attack. However, in all cases White is looking to complicate the position and ideally to attack!

□ C.Ward ■ S.Erenburg

Reykjavik 2006

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bxf6 Qxf6 7 Qb3 (Diagram 2)

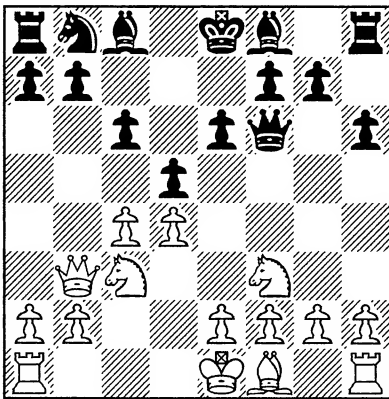


Diagram 2 (B)

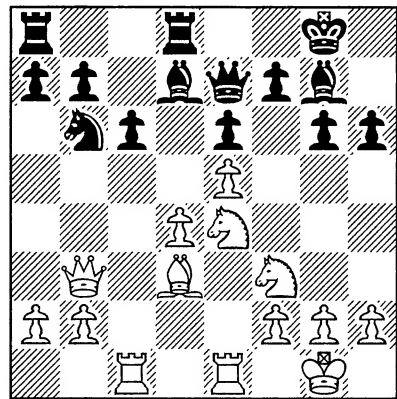


Diagram 3 (B)

Although obviously it does fulfil such a function, the primary aim of this early queen sortie is not just to guard the c4-pawn, as that, of course, could have been done far more naturally through 7 e3. Instead White is aspiring to an early e2-e4 advance. Furthermore, 7 Qb3 facilitates long castling, but arguably the most important point behind it is that it prevents ...Bb4+ should the c3-knight move away.

7...dxc4

Although this may appear to concede the centre prematurely, Black takes the view that he should take on c4 while White has to recapture with his queen, rather than waiting until e2-e4 appears and Bxc4 becomes an option.

8 Qxc4 Nd7

The bishop-pair might offer Black long-term potential, but in the short term it is his knight that is going to lead the fight to gain more freedom. In particular Black is now ready to meet e2-e4 with ...e6-e5, and especially if he dabbles in a fianchetto, Black won't want a white pawn making it to e5.

It goes without saying that my preference is for White, but the fact is that Black hasn't scored even one victory without 8...Nd7 (and not very many with it!). Although it's kind of cheating because White does castle kingside, the two alternatives to the text feature two different but nevertheless in their own way rather attractive plans:

a) 8...Qd8 9 g3 Be7 10 Bg2 0-0 11 0-0 Nd7 12 Rfd1 Qa5 13 Nd2 Rd8 14 a3 Qh5 15 Bf3 Qg6 16 Qa2 Nb6 17 Nc4 Nxc4 18 Qxc4 f5 19 e3 Kh8 20 Ne2 Bd6 21 Nf4 Qf6 22 Nd3 Bd7 23 Qc3 Be8 24 Bg2 Rac8 25 b4, with a clear positional advantage in R.Keene-G.Iskov, New York 1981.

b) 8...g6 9 e4 (as Black is not ready to respond with ...e5) 9...Bg7 10 e5 Qe7 11 Bd3 Nd7 12 0-0 0-0 13 Ne4 Rd8 14 Rac1 Nb6 15 Qb3 Bd7 16 Rfe1 **(Diagram 3)**, again left Black cramped and suffering in A.Veingold-R.Molander, Jyvaskyla 1999.

9 0-0-0!?

As you will soon discover, studying this position alone is not sufficient to cover the whole of the Moscow Variation. However, without this aggressive but up to now incredibly rare idea, White had previously struggled to prove an advantage against what is generally considered to be a solid black system. Far more common are the like of 9 e3, 9 e4 and 9 g3, although aside from the text, it is only 9 Rd1 that prevents Black's natural response ...e5 for reasons that are soon made clear.

9...g6

Basically 9 0-0-0!? only seems to have occurred six times in competitive play and so I'm going to tender at least some coverage to those other practical encounters:

a) 9...Bd6 and now:

a1) 10 Ne4 Qe7 (if Black tries to preserve his dark-squared bishop with 10...Qf4+ 11 Nfd2 Be7 12 e3 Qc7 13 Nf3, then his attempt to break free of his shackles with 13...e5?! is unconvincing after 14 d5, which is good for White with 14...Nb6 well met by either 15 d6 Nxc4 16 dxc7 Nb6 17 Nxe5 or simply 15 Qc3) 11 Nxd6+ Qxd6 12 e3 0-0 13 Bd3 was a tad better for White in K.Lerner-S.Erenburg, Tel Aviv 2002, although evidently feeling a little dissatisfied with that, Grandmaster Lerner later attempted to improve.

a2) 10 g3 Qe7 11 Bh3 e5 12 Bxd7+ Bxd7 13 dxe5 Bxe5 14 Nxe5 Qxe5 15 Ne4 Be6 16

Qb4 c5 17 Qb5+ Kf8 18 Qxc5+ Qxc5+ 19 Nxc5 Rc8 20 Kb1 Bf5+ 21 e4 Ke7 22 exf5 Rxc5 23 Rhe1+ Kf6 24 Rd6+ Kxf5 25 Rd7 Kg4 26 Rxf7 did in fact see Lerner go on to win the rook and pawn ending in K.Lerner-G.Kaganskiy, Rishon Le Zion 2004.

b) 9...Qf4+ 10 Kb1 Be7 11 e4 Qc7 12 Bd3 e5 13 Nd5 Qd6 14 dxe5 cxd5 15 Qxc8+ Rxc8 16 exd6 Bxd6 17 exd5 left White a pawn up in Z.Gyimesi-R.Sergejev, Pula 1997.

c) 9...Qd8 10 e4 Nb6 11 Qe2 (11 Qb3 is obviously sensible too, but the following is a very entertaining method) 11...Be7 12 h4!? (**Diagram 4**) 12...Qc7 13 g3 Bf6 14 Bg2 Bd7 15 Kb1 a6 16 Rc1 0-0-0 17 Rhd1 Kb8 18 Ne1 (facilitating f2-f4 and also starting an interesting knight manoeuvre) 18...Rhe8 19 Qf3 Rf8 20 a4 (the position now gets a little murky before White ultimately emerges on top) 20...Be7 21 Nd3 f5 22 e5 g5 23 hxg5 hxg5 24 Qe2 Rh8 25 a5 Nc8 26 b4 Rdf8 27 Nc5 Rh2 28 Bf1 g4 29 Qc4 Na7 30 d5! Bxc5 31 Qxc5 Rc8 32 d6 was the fascinating course of A.Lukovnikov-V.Petrienko, Volgograd 1977. Let's face it, you wouldn't turn down this position (!) and now 32...Qd8 33 Ne2 Nb5 34 Nf4 b6 35 axb6 Kb7 36 Bc4 Na3+ 37 Ka1 Nxc4 38 Rxc4 Qxb6 39 Rd2 Qb5 40 Qxb5+ axb5 41 Rcc2 Rh1+ 42 Kb2 Ra8 43 Rc1 Rxc1 44 Kxc1 Ra4 45 Nd3 (**Diagram 5**) and 1-0 was a visual final position. Clearly Black never managed to solve the problem of his bad bishop!

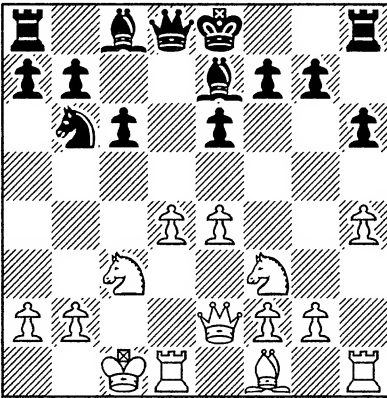


Diagram 4 (B)

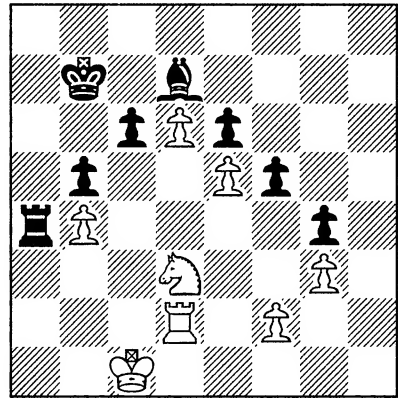


Diagram 5 (B)

d) Finally, please note that in the same way that it is against 9 Rd1, 9...e5? is prevented in view of 10 dxe5 Nxe5 11 Qe4! (**Diagram 6**) 11...Bd6 and now 12 Rxd6!, netting two minor pieces for the rook.

10 e3

Aside from the fact that winning gained me a high finish in a strong Open event, I was very pleased with the aggressive but nonetheless controlled manner in which

I played this game. Although I would like to get my pawn to e5, I don't want it stuck on e4 for too long as that square is handy for a knight. It is also aesthetically pleasing to advance my pawns on the opposite colour to my remaining bishop.

10...Bg7 11 h4 (Diagram 7) 11...0-0

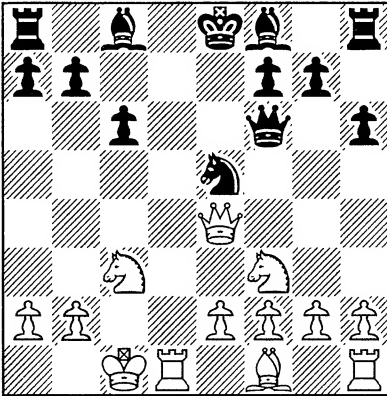


Diagram 6 (B)

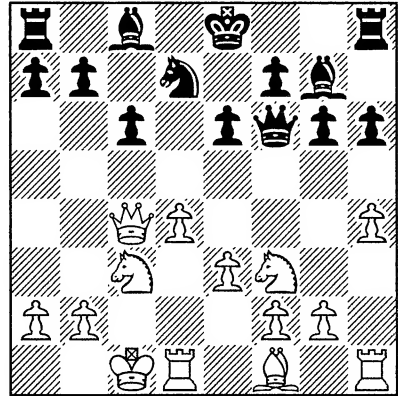


Diagram 7 (B)

Black could not consider breaking with 11...e5 before castling as then 12 Ne4 followed by hopping in to d6 after taking on e5 would of course be check.

12 Ne4 Qe7 13 Qc2

Withdrawing the queen from a possible tempo gain by the black knight and facilitating a later Bc4.

13...Re8

Black is reluctant to move his knight from d7 because he still harbours the ambition of ultimately freeing his light-squared bishop with ...e5.

14 Bd3 a5

I almost don't want to remove the suspense regarding why Black is obviously reluctant to advance his e-pawn, but while the reason is essentially the same throughout this middlegame, I will give the following short line: 14...e5 15 h5! f5 16 Qb3+ Kh8 17 Neg5!.

15 Kb1 a4 16 a3 (Diagram 8)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! White has just made two useful waiting moves, but while it is easy for him (i.e. me!) to keep improving his position, aside from what follows, Black has run out of things to do.

16...e5

Hence he cracks, but I was waiting for just this moment to pounce!

17 h5! g5 18 Ng3

The point. Black could not allow the h-file to become open, but now the f5-square is irrevocably weakened.

18...Nb6 19 Bh7+

This check is perhaps not a necessary part of my plan, but I believe that it is worthwhile as the black king is worse off on h8.

19...Kh8 20 Bf5 (Diagram 9)

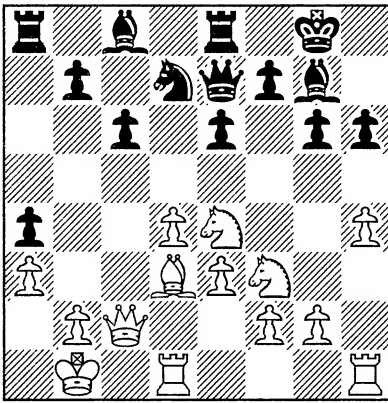


Diagram 8 (B)

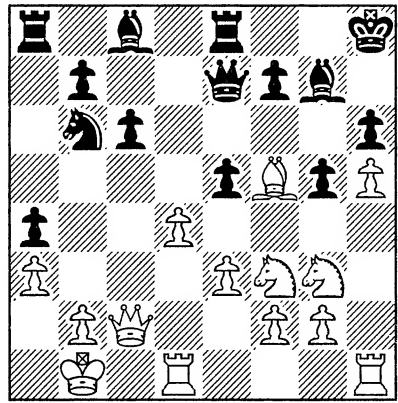


Diagram 9 (B)

Yes, I want the f5-square and in long term I want it for a knight, which is why I force off Black's 'good' bishop.

20...Be6 21 Bxe6 Qxe6 22 Nxe5 Bxe5 23 dx5 Qxe5 24 Nf5

This is a fantastic square for the knight and while it is soon secured as an outpost, the presence of an e-pawn for White prevents Black's own knight from finding a similarly nice home.

24...Re6 25 f3 Nd5 26 e4

Buzz off!

26...Ne7 27 Ne3! (Diagram 10)

Keeping pieces on compounds Black's problems.

27...b5 28 Ng4 Qf4 29 Rd7

Now it's all fairly straightforward chess. Domination of the open file is nice, but

the seventh rank is irresistible!

29...Kg8 30 Rhd1 Rf8 31 Qc5!

Turning up the heat. Now the black knight is a liability.

31...Re8 32 Rd8 Kf8

Funnily enough 32...Rxd8 33 Rxd8+ Kg7 (or 33...Kh7 34 Rd7) 34 Qd4+ f6 35 Qd7 would probably transpose to the game which doesn't have long to run!

33 Rxe8+ Kxe8 34 Qd4 (Diagram 11)

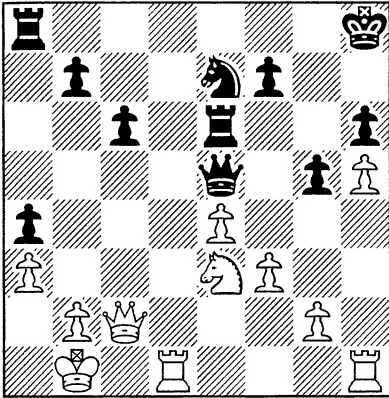


Diagram 10 (B)

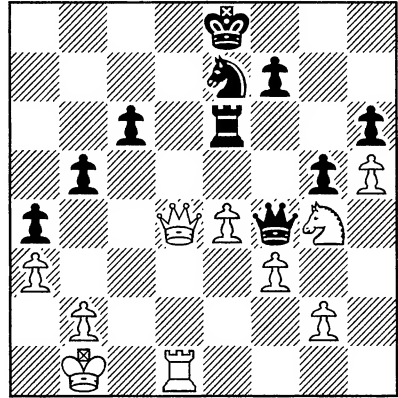


Diagram 11 (B)

Threatening rather dangerous checks on h8 and d8.

34...f6 35 Qd7+ Kf7 36 Nxh6+ 1-0

Winning the rook and more.

Looking A Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bxf6 Qxf6 7 Qb3 (Diagram 12)

I think that it is fair to say that the introductory game adequately covers 7...dxc4 and now I'd like to tackle the alternatives, which are chiefly:

A: 7...Qd8

B: 7...Nd7

C: 7...a5!?

There's also a couple of minor options:

a) 7...Be7 8 e4 dxe4 9 Nxe4 Qf5 10 Bd3 Qa5+, after which most would block the check with a knight to retain a plus, but fascinating was 11 Ke2!? Nd7 12 Rhe1 0-0 13 Kf1 e5 14 Ng3 Bb4 15 Re2 exd4 16 Qd1 Rd8 17 a3 Bf8 18 Bc2 Nf6 19 Qd3 g6 20 Ne5 Qc7 21 Rae1 h5 22 Nxcg6! fxcg6 23 Re7!! Bxe7 24 Qxcg6+ Kf8 25 Qh6+ Kg8 26 Nxc5 Nxc5 27 Bh7+ and 1-0 in I.Novikov-M.Van Herck, Antwerp 1996.

b) 7...Bd6 8 e4 dxe4 9 Nxe4 Qe7 10 Bd3 Nd7 11 0-0 Bc7 12 Rfe1 0-0 13 Rad1 (an obvious appeal of these positions for White is that moves just come so easily) 13...Re8 14 Bc2 (**Diagram 13**) 14...Ba5 15 Re2 Nf8 and now 16 d5! is probably very powerful, but 16 a3 Rd8 17 Qe3 Bd7 18 Nc5 Be8 19 Be4 Bb6 20 Na4 Bc7 21 Nc3 Qf6 22 g3 Kh8 23 Red2 Rac8 24 Bc2 Bb8 25 b4 b5 26 c5 a5 27 Ne5 Qe7 28 f4 saw White continuing to savour his position in E.Bogoljubow-G.Kieninger, Krakow 1942.

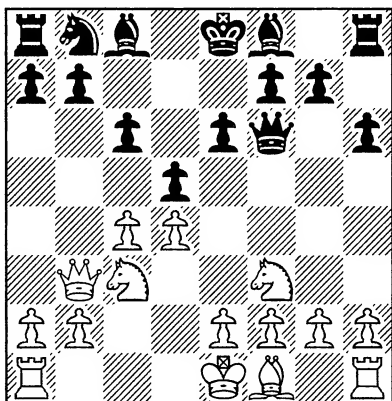


Diagram 12 (B)

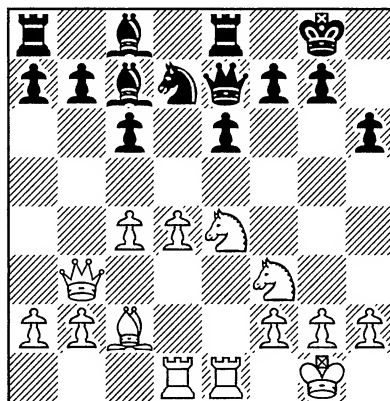


Diagram 13 (B)

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bxf6 Qxf6 7 Qb3 Qd8

I guess the main reason for this retreat is that when the inevitable e2-e4 break comes, the black queen won't be so vulnerable. Certainly ...Be7 will feel safer with her majesty back at home, but this lack of ambition means that Black can expect to remain cramped for a long time to come. Although one sneaky idea behind the text is the option to swing the queen out to a5, it is clear that Black is falling well behind in the development stakes and, as he is rather spatially deprived, his bishop-pair hardly excels.

8 e4 dxe4

Instead 8...dxc4?! 9 Bxc4 b5 10 Bd3 a6 11 Rd1 Qc7 12 0-0 c5 appeared to be taking ridiculous liberties in V.Rao-A.Belakovskaia, Philadelphia 1992, and was ultimately punished in the most spectacular of ways: 13 Be2 Nd7 14 d5 c4 15 Qc2 e5 16 a4 Rb8 17 axb5 axb5 18 b3 b4 19 d6 Qb7 20 Na4 c3 21 Rd5 f6 22 Rfd1 Kf7 23 Bc4

Kg6 24 Nh4+ Kh7 25 Qe2 g5 26 Nf5 Kg6 27 h3 Qa7 28 Ra5! and Black resigned in view of 28...Qxa5 29 Qh5+!! Kxh5 30 Bf7 mate!

9 Nxe4 (Diagram 14)

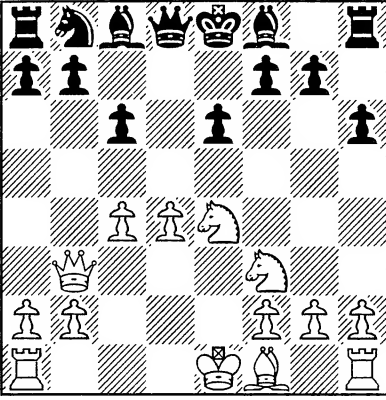


Diagram 14 (B)

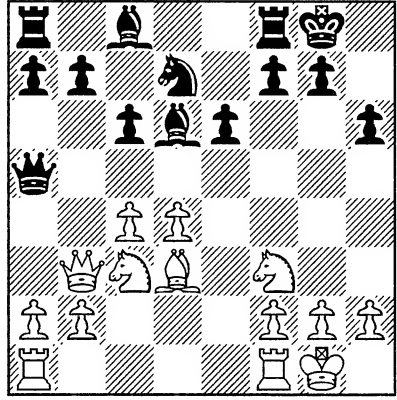


Diagram 15 (W)

9...Qa5+

Although another queen move seems a little cheeky, this does at least force the return of White's knight from e4. If this sortie is delayed a move longer then, as you will discover in Line B, White has an interesting way available to avoid the check.

10 Nc3 Nd7

This knight has nowhere else to go and of course Black's light-squared bishop isn't going anywhere fast either.

11 Bd3 Bd6

11...Be7 is too passive and after 12 0-0 0-0 13 Rfe1, not only is the ...e5-break going to be too tough to arrange, but as the e-pawn is pinned, neither will the alternative challenge ...c5 appeal.

12 0-0 0-0 (Diagram 15) 13 c5!?

13 Rfe1 e5 14 c5 exd4 15 cxd6 Nc5 16 Qc2 Nxd3 17 Qxd3 dxc3 18 bxc3 also left White with an edge in M.Suba-N.Kirov, Eksjo 1982, but the text is possibly more accurate.

13...Bc7

13...Be7 14 Qc4 would also see White intending to expand on the queenside, but Black would then have no chance of arranging the freeing ...e5.

14 Qc4

White plans b2-b4 and possibly a2-a4 first if he is serious about trapping the black queen.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! I'm already sounding like a broken record, but White's space advantage definitely leaves him with the upper hand.

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bxf6 Qxf6 7 Qb3 Nd7 (Diagram 16)

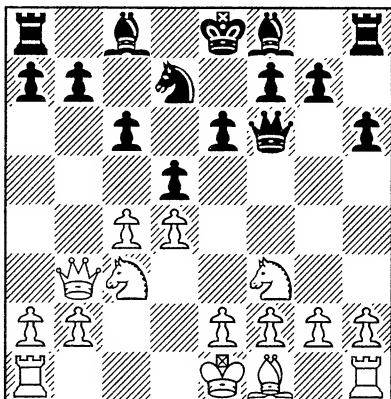


Diagram 16 (W)

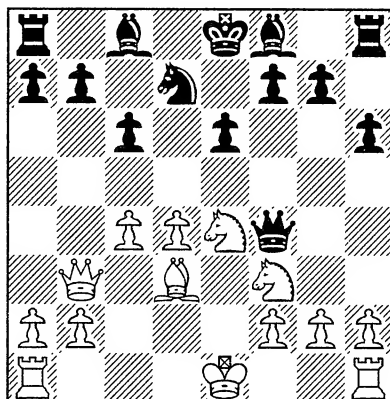


Diagram 17 (B)

You can't really argue with this move. Black has not committed himself to ...dxc4 and hopes to get in ...e5 later. Furthermore, compared to Line A, Black's queen is yet to commit itself.

8 e4 dxe4

I guess it's just about worth mentioning that Black can't get away with 8...dxc4 9 Bxc4 e5? because after 10 dxe5 Nxe5 11 Nxe5 Qxe5 his f-pawn would hang, while flicking in 9...b5 would be too loosening.

9 Nxe4 Qf4



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: Originally I thought that I might have to make a divide here for 9...Qf5 and 9...Qd8. However, when I looked at the few practical games available, I noticed that it was a case of 'all roads lead to Rome' as after 10 Bd3 Black was giving the queen check on a5, thereby essentially transposing to Line A.

However, it is also true to say that after 9...Qd8, White has the additional possibil-

ity of 10 0-0-0!?. Instead the text has proven to be the most popular choice for the black queen, probably because of her flexibility on f4. She can try to make a nuisance of herself on the kingside, but can always retreat to the relative safety of the queenside on c7.

10 Bd3 (Diagram 17) 10...Be7

The most solid continuation although a couple of alternatives suggest themselves:

a) 10...Nf6 11 Nxf6+ gxf6 12 0-0 Rg8 13 Be2 Bd6 14 g3 h5 15 Kh1 Qg4 16 Qe3 (**Diagram 18**), when in A.Kharlov-V.Malakhov, Moscow 2005, White's central control and better piece coordination put him in the driving seat. An amazing situation then turned up after 16...Bd7 17 d5 cxd5 18 cxd5 Qf5 19 Rad1 e5 20 Nd2 Be7 21 f4 exf4 22 Rxf4 Qxd5+ 23 Ne4 Qe5 24 Nxf6+ Bxf6 25 Re4 Bc6 26 Bb5 with pins galore! However, following 26...Kf8 27 Bxc6 Qc7 28 Bd5 it was a classic case of 'opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker' and it was White who secured victory a few moves later.

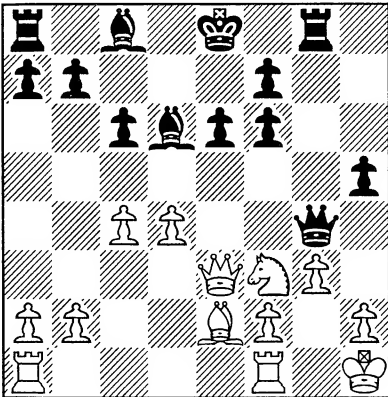


Diagram 18 (B)

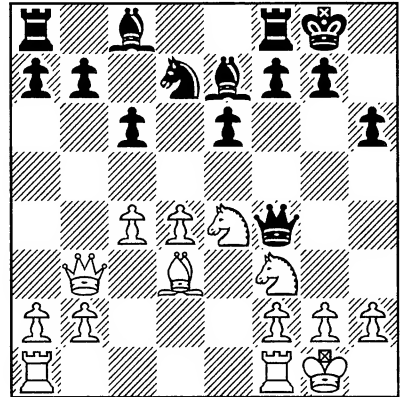


Diagram 19 (W)

b) 10...e5 when White should choose between:

b1) 11 0-0 Be7 (it would be a brave Black player who would dabble in 11...f5 12 Ng3 e4 13 Rae1 Kd8) 12 Rfe1 exd4, which after 13 Ng3 Nc5 14 Qa3 Qd6 15 Bf5 Ne6 16 Qxd6 Bxd6 17 Nxd4 led to a small endgame advantage in J.Timman-B.Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 1996.

b2) 11 dxe5 Nxe5 12 Nxe5 Qxe5 13 0-0 Be7 and now either 14 Rfe1 or 14 f4!?. Here Black's bishop-pair could certainly prove useful given how the position has opened up, but he still hasn't castled and White can mount an attack on the kingside.

11 0-0 0-0 (Diagram 19) 12 Bc2!?

I am giving preference to this move because the practical game associated with it has a certain appeal. The theme involved in this bishop retreat is prominent in other practical encounters, although so too is another useful idea: 12 Rfe1 b6 (or 12...Rd8 13 Rad1 Qc7 14 Bb1 Nf8 15 c5!, as in V.Smyslov-T.Petrosian, Moscow 1971) 13 Rad1 Bb7 14 Bb1 Rfe8 15 c5!? Qc7 16 Qc2 f5 17 Ng3 Nf8 18 b4 a5 19 a3 axb4 20 axb4 bxc5 21 bxc5 when White had a juicy outpost available on e5, pressure against e6 and after 21...Qa5, the tactic 22 Nxf5! in I.Novikov-A.Bisguier, Philadelphia 1996.

It is useful for White to look to employ the cramping c4-c5, but another common concept is the aligning of his queen and bishop along the b1-h7 diagonal with potentially serious implications for the black king.

12...Rd8 13 Rad1 Qc7 14 Qd3 (Diagram 20)

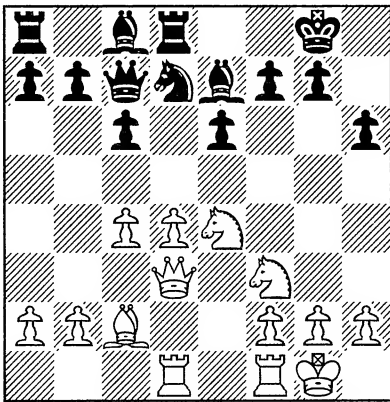


Diagram 20 (B)

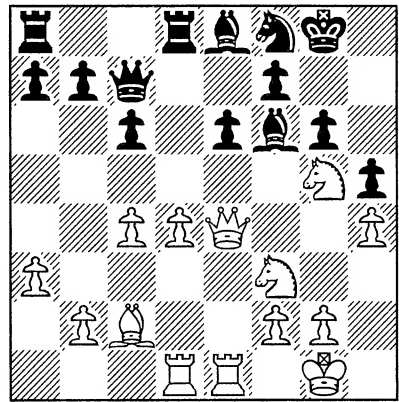


Diagram 21 (W)

14...g6

I guess one could criticize this as it weakens the shell around the black king, but 14...Nf8 would be a passive retreat, while something like 14...c5? is never going to be possible as after White's knight moves (here with 15 Nxc5), mate is threatened via h7.

15 h4 h5

White's direct idea was h4-h5 to challenge Black's kingside structure, but while this stops that, now White is granted access to the g5-square; a feature that he wastes no time in taking advantage of.

16 Neg5! Nf8

Black now needs to be very careful as demonstrated by 16...b6? 17 Nxf7! Kxf7 18 Qxg6+ Kf8 19 Qh6+ Kf7 20 Bg6+ Kf6 21 Bxh5+ Kf5 22 g4+ Ke4 23 Qe3 mate!

17 Qe4 Bd7 18 Rfe1 Be8 19 a3 Bf6 (Diagram 21)

White has all the fun and the rest of the game A.Sulypa-A.Marechal, Rosny sous Bois 2002, is well worth playing over: 20 g4 hxg4 21 Qxg4 c5 22 d5 exd5 23 cxd5 Bxb2 24 h5 gxh5 25 Qxh5 f6 26 Rxe8 Rxe8 27 d6 Qd7 28 Bb3+ Ne6 29 Nxe6 Rxe6 30 Qg6+ Kf8 31 Ng5 fxg5 32 Bxe6 Qg7 33 Qe4 Bd4 34 Rd3 Qe5 35 Rf3+ Ke8 36 Qg6+ Kd8 37 Rf8 mate 1-0.

c) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bxf6 Qxf6 7 Qb3 a5!? (Diagram 22)

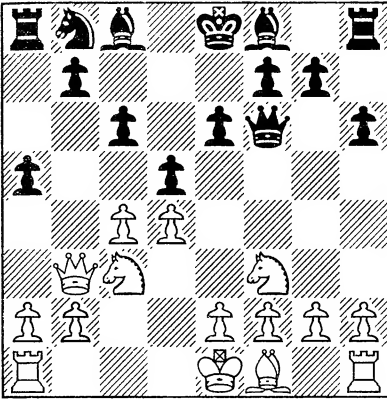


Diagram 22 (W)

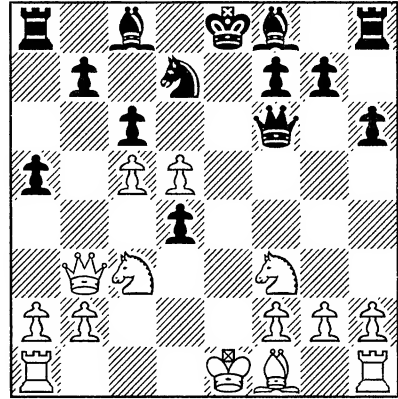


Diagram 23 (W)

I am tempted to say that this constitutes Black's most exciting approach. However, as it might lead to a slightly inferior endgame, I can't say that with 100% certainty!

8 e4

The main idea behind Black's a-pawn advance is to reintroduce the bishop check to the menu, but another point is that the casual 8 a3 is well met by 8...a4! because after 9 Nxa4 dxc4, 10 Qxc4?? impossible is due to the simple fork 10...b5.

One good thing for White about this variation is that if he is not happy with the way our main line turns out, there is plenty of room for innovation.



ROLL THE DICE! One fun new line which I began investigating was 8 c5!? Nd7 9 e4 (a novelty!) 9...e5 10 exd5 exd4 (Diagram 23) 11 dxc6 (or even 11 Ne4 Qe7 12 0-0-0 Nxc5 13 Nxc5 Qxc5+ 14 Kb1 Qxd5 15 Bc4 Qf5+ 16 Ka1) 11...bxc6 12 Ne4 Qe7 13 0-0-0 Nxc5 14 Qb6. Crazy stuff and there are plenty more wicked ideas where that came from!

8...dxe4

Instead 8...a4 9 Qc2 dxe4 10 Nxe4 Bb4+ 11 Kd1 Qf4 (or 11...Qd8 12 c5!) is an inferior version of our main line, because the e4-knight is guarded and 12 Ne5 Nd7 13 g3 Qf5 14 Bd3 0-0 15 f4 is a little worrying for the black queen.

9 Nxe4 Bb4+ (Diagram 24)

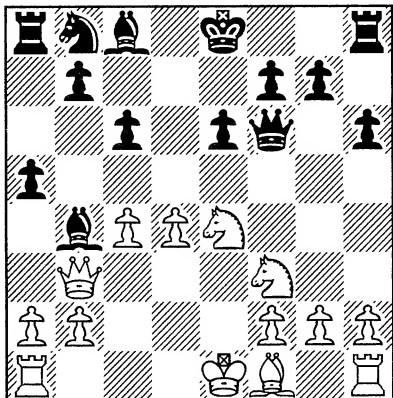


Diagram 24 (W)

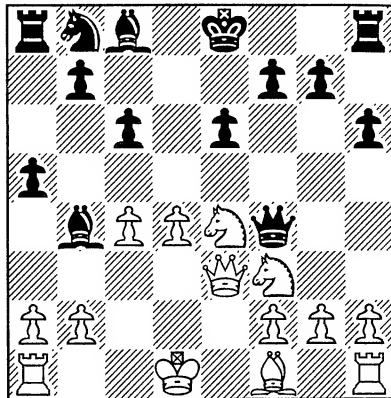


Diagram 25 (B)

10 Kd1

I can remember once contemplating 10 Qxb4 axb4 11 Nxf6+ gxf6, but my conclusion was that the pressure on the a-file compensates Black for his structural deficiencies.

Off the top of my head, another possibility here is 10 Nc3!?. This looks like a waste of time as the knight was happy where it was, but something like 10...Nd7 11 Bd3 e5 12 0-0 exd4 13 Ne4 would see it return and the advance ...a5 could prove to be a weakness.

10...Qf4

Black must gain a tempo against the white knight or else risk his bishop being caught offside. Indeed 10...Qd8? 11 c5! suddenly leaves him lost!

11 Qe3 (Diagram 25)

This appears to lead to a small endgame advantage for White, but if he is not ecstatic with that, there is plenty of play left in 11 Bd3 f5. Indeed, some strong players have recently scored wins with both 12 Ng3 and 12 Nc3, although in truth the unusual positions reached are difficult to assess.

11...Qxe3

11...Bd6 12 g3 Qxe3 13 Nxd6+ Kd7 14 fxe3 Kxd6 15 c5+ would also favour White.

As usual Black's big problem is how to activate his 'bad bishop'.

12 fxe3 Be7

It is tempting to want to knock the knight off its perch, but 12...f5 concedes an outpost on e5 and leaves the e-pawn backward and weak. Furthermore, Black has to be careful not to get his bishop trapped and 13 Ned2 Nd7 14 c5! Bxd2 15 Kxd2 (**Diagram 26**) isn't an attractive solution. Although 15...e5 was possible, now 16 Bc4 e4 17 Nh4 Nf8 18 Raf1 g6 19 g4! suddenly left Black under extreme pressure and 19...fxg4 20 Bf7+ Ke7 21 Bxg6 Be6 22 a3 Bd5 23 Rhg1 h5 24 Rf5 and 1-0 all seemed so simple in J.Cox-J.Van den Bersselaar, Gausdal 2007.

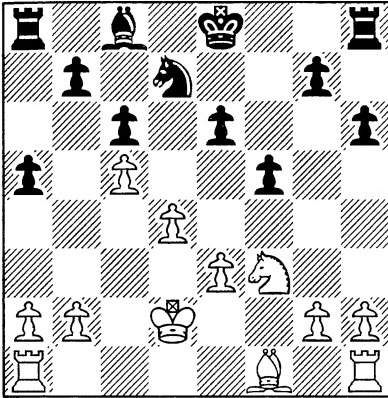


Diagram 26 (B)

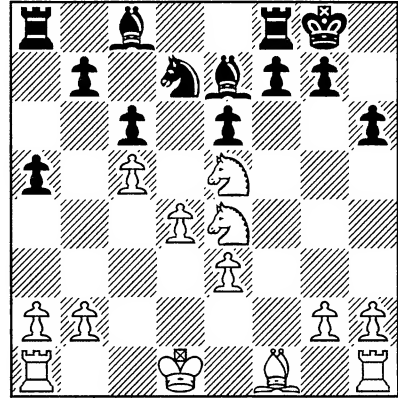


Diagram 27 (W)

13 c5

It is logical for White to want to have his pawns and remaining bishop complementing each other, and now both the b6- and d6-squares are potential outposts for his knights.

13...0-0 14 Ne5 Nd7 (Diagram 27) 15 Nc4

Given that Black still retains his bishop-pair, it's not clear whether White has an edge or not after 15 Nx d7 Bxd7 16 Bc4. Presumably with a strong knight and potential pressure along the f-file, particularly if Black gets in the ...e5 break which he is after, White is not worse, but all the same it does make sense to keep the knights on so as not to help Black solve his development problems.

15...Rd8

Although 15...e5!? 16 Kc2 exd4 17 exd4 Nf6 18 Ned6 Nd5 left Black reasonably placed to activate his army in R.Scherbakov-N.Vitiugov, Sochi 2005, after the superior 16 Ned6!? exd4 17 exd4, I can't see anything better for Black than transposing back to our main variation through 17...Rd8. Note that one important idea is

17...Bf6 18 Kc2!, after which 18...Bxd4? loses to 19 Rd1: when the attacked bishop moves, 20 Nxc8 will leave the d7-knight hanging.

16 Kc2 e5

Surely Black must get this freeing break in while he still has the chance.

17 Ned6

A few years ago I beat International Master Brian Kelly in a London League game playing 17 Ncd6 instead, but unfortunately mislaid the scoresheet! I didn't lose much sleep over that at the time because I concluded that 17 Ned6 was probably stronger. However given my discovery on Black's 18th move, now I'm not so sure!

17...exd4 18 exd4 (Diagram 28)

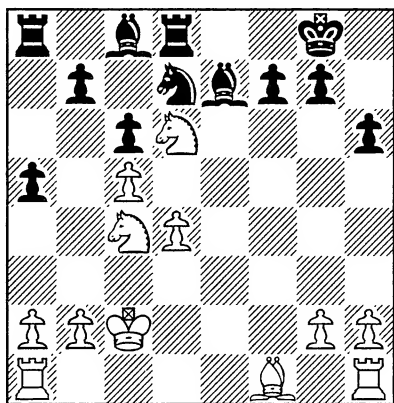


Diagram 28 (B)

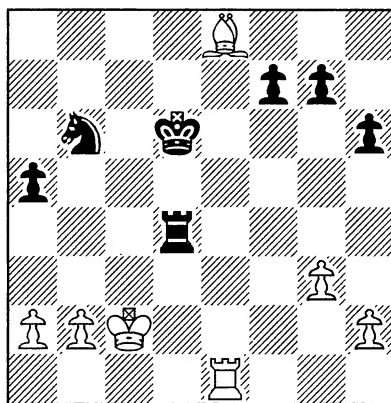


Diagram 29 (B)

18...b6

It is understandable that Black is eager to challenge the c5-pawn, but perhaps this is not necessary right now. Indeed hopefully demonstrating that I am not biased (!), it seems to me that previous annotators have overlooked the simple defence 18...Nf6!?. Although this temporarily relinquishes control of the b6-square, it does allow Black to hope to break with ...b5 and one idea is to play dynamically after 19 Re1 (or 19 Be2 Be6 20 Nxb7 Rxd4 21 Ncxa5 Bf5+ 22 Kc3 Rd7, with decent compensation) with 19...Be6, offering the b7-pawn. Possibly I'm overlooking something, but if White is not careful, Black's bishops could come close to achieving the quality of life which they had previously only dreamt of!

19 Re1 Kf8

I suppose Black could retreat the attacked bishop to f8, but 19...Bxd6 20 Nxd6 bxc5 21 Bc4 suddenly (and incidentally ringing a bell on that illusive Ward-Kelly tus-

sle!) leaves White very actively placed and now definitely playing with more than just the two knights!

20 Nxc8 Rdxc8

Ironically now after 21 cxb6 Rcb8 22 g3 Nxb6 23 Ne5 Rd8 24 Bg2 Rxd4 25 Nxc6 Rc8 26 Rxe7 Rxc6+ 27 Bxc6 Kxe7 28 Re1+ Kd6 29 Be8 (**Diagram 29**) it was White who had emerged with a bishop for knight advantage in the endgame. We have been following the encounter N.Sulava-G.Timoscenko, Arca 1999, which concluded: 29...f5 30 Bf7 f4 31 Re6+ Kc7 32 Re7+ Kd6 33 Re6+ Kc7 34 Bh5 fxg3 35 hxg3 Rc4+ 36 Kd3 Rb4?! 37 b3 a4 38 Bd1 axb3 39 axb3! Nd7 40 Re7 g5? 41 Kc3 Rb6 42 Bg4 Rc6+ 43 Kd4 Rd6+ 44 Ke3 h5 45 Bxh5 Rb6 46 Bf7 Kd8 47 Re8+ Kc7 48 Rg8 Ne5 49 Bc4 Nxc4+ 50 bxc4 Rb3+ 51 Kf2 Rc3 52 Rxg5 Rxc4 53 Rd5! Kc6 54 Rd1 Rg4 55 Kf3 Rg8 56 g4 Rf8+ 57 Kg3 Rg8 58 Kf4 Rf8+ 59 Ke5 Rg8 60 Kf5 Rf8+ 61 Ke6 Rg8 62 Rc1+ Kb5 63 Rg1 Kc6 64 g5 Re8+ 65 Kf7 Re2 66 Rd1 Rf2+ 67 Kg7 Kc5 68 g6 Rg2 69 Kf7 Rf2+ 70 Kg8 Rg2 71 g7 Rg3 72 Rh1 1-0

Conclusion

7 Qb3 is not a popular line in the Moscow Variation and the concept of incorporating long castling with it is relatively unknown. I would, though, suggest that the introductory game has an obvious appeal, especially for those of an aggressive nature. Actually I rather like the whole system for White and particularly the concept of attacking the enemy monarch whether the white king makes its home on the kingside or the queenside. Indeed, my only real doubt revolves around the endgame potentially reached after 7...a5. However, whether or not it is ultimately decided that White does have a significant edge there, these waters are relatively untested and there are plenty of interesting deviations available.

Chapter Nine

Livening Up the Exchange Variation: Part One

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 c6 7 Bd3 Bg4!?
(Diagram 1)

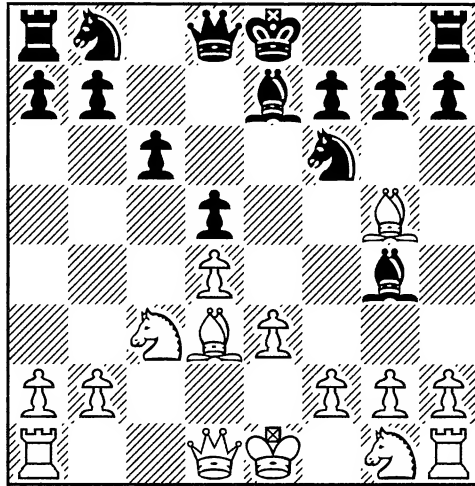


Diagram 1 (W)

A number of openings have their fun variations, but are to some extent blighted by their 'exchange variation'. The Queen's Gambit Declined is one of these. It can be played dynamically by the second player (with something like the Tartakower

or Cambridge Springs in mind), except that when White plays $cx\!d\!5$ the central pawn structure becomes static and opportunities to generate early counter-chances are reduced. I have experienced these variations with both colours and have some suggestions about how to respond as Black, aiming of course to liven up the resulting positions.

Here I shall be examining in detail some variations based on a $\dots Bg\!4$ approach. Black can also play actively with an early $\dots Bb\!4$, which is the subject of our next chapter. In both cases Black aims to play more energetically than in the better-known main lines.

□ I.Glek ■ L.Yudasin

Tilburg 1994

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 c6 7 Bd3 Bg4!?

Black seeks a solution to the development of his problem piece, rather than leave it in the way on c8. His reasoning is that if the bishop can find a firm footing on the kingside (such as the g6-square), then he will have no problems in co-ordinating the remainder of his forces.

8 Qc2 Bh5 9 Bxf6 Bxf6 10 f4!? (Diagram 2)

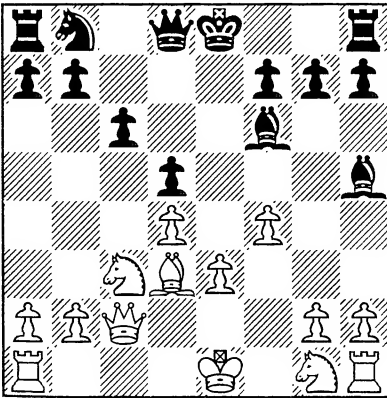


Diagram 2 (B)

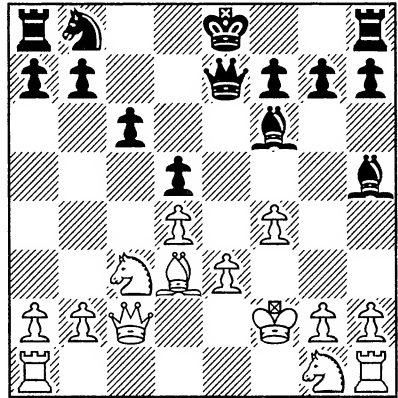


Diagram 3 (B)

A radical approach to stop Black completing his plan. White is aiming to drown Black's pesky light-squared bishop in a sea of kingside pawns, even at the risk of weakening himself.

10...Bg4

A change of tack as the bishop seeks calmer waters. However moving the bishop

again allows White some initiative so it's worthwhile considering the alternatives at this point:

a) Black found himself in trouble after 10...g5?! 11 Nh3 gxf4 12 Nxf4 Bg6 13 0-0 Nd7 14 Rf3 0-0 15 Bxg6 hxg6 16 Ne6! in S.Berezjuk-M.Jirovsky, Ostrava 2002, so this continuation isn't recommended.

b) There is an interesting possibility that ignores the threat to trap the bishop, namely 10...Qe7! and now:

b1) After 11 Nxd5?! cxd5 12 Qc8+ Qd8 13 Qxb7 Nd7 14 Qxd5 Bg4, White's active position doesn't quite offer him enough play for the piece, as shown by 15 Qe4+ Be7 16 f5 Nf6 17 Qc6+ Kf8 18 h3 Rc8 19 Qa6 Bh5 20 g4 Nd5.

b2) I don't rate defending the d-pawn from d2: 11 Kd2 Nd7 12 h3 0-0 13 g4 Bg6 14 f5 Rae8 15 Nd1 Bg5 16 Kc1 Bxe3+ 17 Kb1 Bxd4, with plenty of play for Black.

b3) Thus White's best is the natural defensive move 11 Kf2 (**Diagram 3**), after which Black has a couple of interesting lines:

b31) He might try Jirovsky's thrust one move later with 11...g5!?. Now 12 f5 Nd7 13 Re1 0-0 14 h3 g4 doesn't impress for White, nor does the sharp option 12 Nxd5!? cxd5 13 Qc8+ Qd8 14 Qxb7 gxf4! (but not 14...Nd7?! 15 Qxd5 0-0 16 Qe4 Bg6 17 f5, when White is better) 15 Qxa8 fxe3+, which leaves Black with the stronger attack. However White has a third option that I quite like: 12 Nh3! g4 (if 12...Bg4 then 13 Nxc5 Bxc5 14 fxg5 Qxg5 15 Rhf1 Nd7 16 Rae1 0-0-0 17 Kg1, yields slightly the better chances for White; I suppose that Black might be able to get away with 12...Nd7 13 Rhe1 g4 14 Ng1 Nf8 15 Nge2 Bh4+ 16 Ng3 0-0-0 17 Kg1 Bxg3 18 hxg3 f6, although I still prefer the first player) 13 Ng1 Nd7 14 Nge2 (**Diagram 4**), when despite the loss of time Black's clumsy set-up on the kingside enables White to claim an edge.

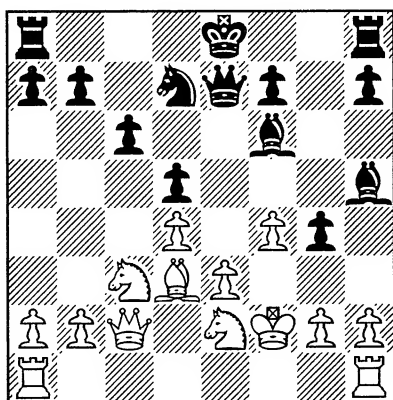


Diagram 4 (B)

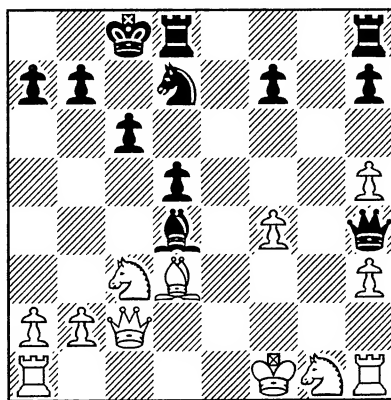


Diagram 5 (W)

b32) Playing the preliminary 11...Nd7, and then meeting 12 h3 with 12...g5! is my recommendation. Then 13 g4 (if 13 f5? then 13...g4!) 13...gx4 14 ex4 Bxd4+ 15 Kf1 0-0-0 16 gxh5 Qh4 (**Diagram 5**) leads to sharp play, and after, for example, 17 Nxd5 Kb8 18 Nf3 Qxh5 19 Nxd4 Qxd5 Black is most certainly not worse in this unclear position.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Although my suggestion of 10...Qe7 has never been played, I believe that it renders Black's whole system perfectly playable and leads to decidedly double-edged play.

Returning to 10...Bg4 (**Diagram 6**):

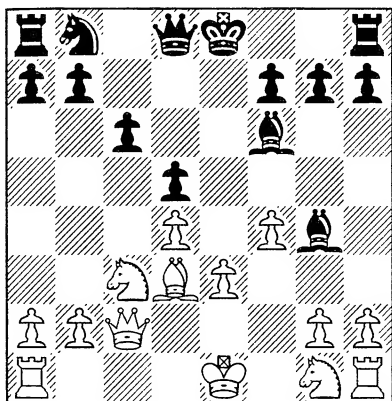


Diagram 6 (W)

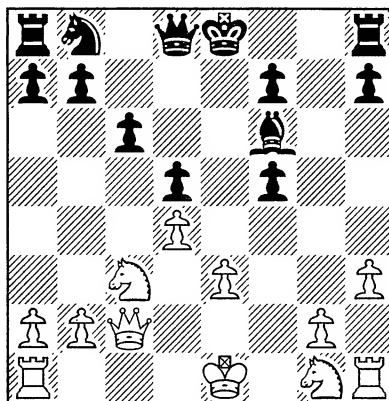


Diagram 7 (W)

11 f5

It is probably not good to capture on h7: 11 Bxh7?! Bxd4 (regaining the pawn yields at least equality, but also tempting is 11...Na6!? 12 Bd3 Nb4 13 Qd2 Bh4+ 14 Kf1 Nxd3 15 Qxd3 Qf6, with good compensation due to the bishop-pair, better structure and safer king) 12 exd4 Qh4+ 13 Kf1 Qxh7 14 Re1+ Kf8 15 Qxh7 Rxh7, with a fine game for Black who has the superior pawn structure.

11...g6 12 h3

Consistent. Again greed is not a good idea: 12 fxg6 hxg6 13 Bxg6?! Bh4+! 14 Kd2 Qg5 15 Bd3 Bf2 with complications in which Black is favourite.

12...Bxf5

Sooner or later Black has to make this move. Instead 12...Bh4+ 13 Kf1 and only then 13...Bxf5 can be met by 14 Bxf5 gxf5 15 Nf3 Bg3 16 Qxf5 Nd7 17 e4, which

shows that White's position is the more comfortable to play.

13 Bxf5 gxf5 (Diagram 7)

It's evident that both sides have had to make some positional concessions, and the question is who is best placed to cash in.

14 Nge2!

After the premature 14 Qxf5, Black can consolidate with 14...Nd7 15 Nf3 Qe7 16 Kf2 Qe6, with about equal chances.

14...Bh4+?

14...Bg5? comes to more or less the same thing: White is much better after 15 Qxf5 Nd7 16 e4 Qf6 17 Rf1 dxe4 18 Nxe4 Qxf5 19 Nd6+ Ke7 20 Nxf5+. However why should Black lose a tempo by moving the bishop again? The correct solution is the straightforward developing move 14...Nd7 as mentioned by Glek, after which Black equalizes following 15 Qxf5 Qe7 16 e4 dxe4 17 Qxe4 0-0-0, or by meeting 17 0-0-0 with 17...e3!?.

15 g3 Bg5 16 0-0?

Praised by Ftacnik, but I have to disagree as after this Black should be fine. I prefer the simple 16 Qxf5: for example, 16...Nd7 (or 16...0-0 17 e4 Qf6 18 Qxf6 Bxf6 19 exd5 Rd8 20 0-0, with an extra pawn) 17 e4 Qf6 (no better is 17...dxe4 18 Nxe4 Be7 19 0-0 0-0 20 Rf4, with great difficulties for Black) 18 0-0! (18 Rf1 dxe4 19 Nxe4 Qxf5 20 Nd6+ Ke7 21 Nxf5+ Ke6 is not quite as bad for the second player) 18...Qxf5 19 Rxf5 Be3+ 20 Kg2 dxe4 21 Nxe4 Ke7 22 Re1, putting Black under strong pressure.

16...Bxe3+ 17 Kh2 Nd7 18 Rxf5 Qe7 19 Raf1 (Diagram 8)

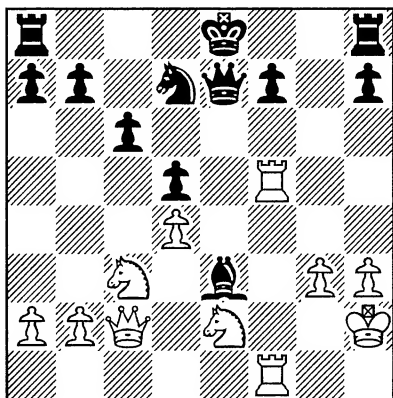


Diagram 8 (B)

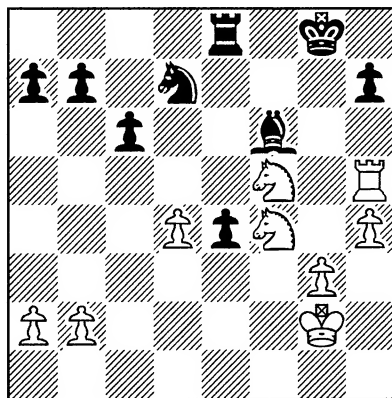


Diagram 9 (B)

19...f6?

Yudasin misses 19...0-0 20 Rh5 f5! 21 Rhxf5 Rae8 with easy equality.

20 R1f3?!

Interesting here is 20 Rxd5! cxd5 21 Nxd5 Qd6, when I prefer White whether he captures on e3 or on a8.

20...0-0

Another possibility was 20...Bg5!?

**21 Rh5 f5 22 Nd1 Bg5 23 h4 Bf6 24 Re3! Qf7 25 Rxf5 Rae8 26 Nf4 Rxe3 27 Nxe3 Qe8
28 Rh5 Qe4 29 Qxe4 dxe4 30 Nf5**

Black has defended against the direct attack by exchanging queens, but now White's active pieces are able to create annoying threats.

30...Re8

If 30...Nb6, then 31 Nh6+ Kg7 32 Ng4 is unpleasant.

31 Kg2 (Diagram 9) 31...c5?

Black should sit tight with something like 31...b6.

32 dxc5 Nxc5

If 32...Bxb2 then 33 Nd6.

33 Nh6+ Kg7 34 Ng4! Be7

Making the best of a bad situation. White's knights are just so tricky, as shown by both 34...Rc8 35 Rxc5! and 34...Nd3 35 Rxh7+!

35 Re5 Kf8 36 b4 Nd3 37 Rxe4 Nxf4+

The other try 37...Nxb4 also seems inadequate: 38 Ne6+ Kf7 (or 38...Kg8 39 Nh6+ Kh8 40 Rg4 and wins) 39 Ng5+ Bxg5 40 Rxb4, with excellent winning chances for White.

38 Rxf4+ Kg7 39 Re4 Kf8 40 Nh6 Rc8 41 Nf5 Bf6 42 a4 Rc6 43 b5 Rc3 44 Nd6 b6 45 Rf4! Rc2+

If 45...Ke7, White strikes with 46 Rxf6! (yet another fork!) 46...Rc2+ 47 Rf2 Rxf2+ 48 Kxf2 Kxd6 49 g4 and wins.

46 Rf2 Rxf2+ 47 Kxf2 Be5 48 Nf5 Kf7 49 Kf3 Ke6 50 Ne3 Bc7 51 g4 Ke5 52 g5 Bd8 53 Kg4 Kd4 54 Nf5+ Kc5 55 h5 Kb4 56 Nd4 Kxa4 57 Kf5 Be7 58 g6 hxg6+ 59 hxg6 Bf8 60 Ne6 Bh6 61 Kg4 1-0

Black resigned in view of 61...Kxb5 62 Kh5 Bc1 63 g7.

Although Black was unsuccessful in this game, the attempt at refutation with 9 Bxf6 Bxf6 10 f4!? can, in my opinion, be adequately met by 10...Qe7!. The bulk of the basic theory below is less challenging and allows Black to peacefully implement his plan, thereby obtaining an acceptable game.

Looking a Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3

Sometimes White prefers 6 Qc2 and only then 6...c6 7 e3, transposing to Line B.

6...c6 (Diagram 10)

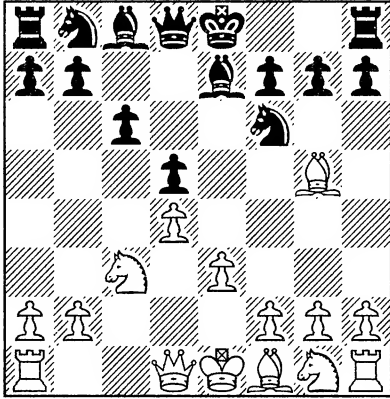


Diagram 10 (W)

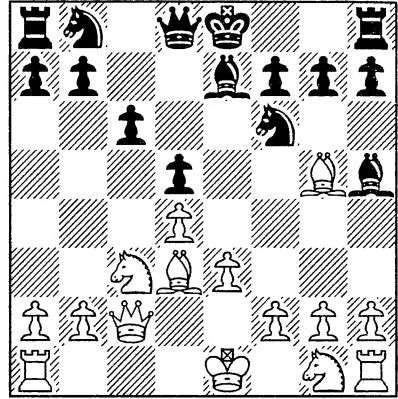


Diagram 11 (W)

White usually now opts for one of:

A: 7 Bd3

B: 7 Qc2

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 c6 7 Bd3 Bg4!?

The bishop develops into thin air, but, by following up with ...Bh5-g6, Black intends to challenge for the light squares and, at the same time, find a positive role for his otherwise most passive minor piece.

8 Qc2

In Y.Yakovich-T.Polak, Dresden 2007, White preferred 8 Qb3 Qb6 9 Qc2, but the fact that Black's queen has been invited to b6 doesn't really benefit White, and Black should continue with his normal plan, i.e. 9...Bh5 (Black tried 9...h6 10 Bh4 Na6 11 a3 Qa5 12 Qc1 c5?! in the aforementioned game, but 13 Bb5+ was then somewhat awkward; otherwise 9...Nbd7 10 Nge2 h6 11 Bh4 Bxe2, is solid enough but the bishop-pair should give White a small pull) 10 Nge2 Bg6, etc.

8...Bh5! (Diagram 11)

The consistent continuation. Black can also consider 8...Nbd7!?, which allows White additional possibilities, but probably isn't too bad. After the natural 9 Nge2, Black has:

a) A solid but slightly passive approach is introduced by 9...Bxe2, hoping that White won't be able to make anything of his light-squared preponderance. C.Horvath-I.Csom, Budapest 1999, continued 10 Bxe2 0-0 11 0-0 Ne4 (simplifying to near-equality) 12 Bxe7 Qxe7 13 Nxe4 dxe4 14 b4 Nf6 15 Rab1 a6 16 a4 Rfd8 17 b5 (this doesn't impress, but it's not clear that there was anything better) 17...cxb5 18 axb5 a5! 19 Rfc1 Nd5 20 Bc4 Nb4 21 Qb3 b6, and Black was fine.

b) More natural is 9...Bh5, leading to a further divide:

b1) Following 10 Ng3 Bg6 11 Nf5, 11...0-0!? is interesting, showing that Black can even contemplate giving up his 'good' bishop. After the further moves 12 Nxe7+ Qxe7 13 0-0 Rfe8 14 Rab1 Qe6 15 b4 Bxd3 16 Qxd3 Ne4 17 Bf4 g5 18 Bg3 h5, Black was the one who was pressing in G.Markotic-D.Campora, Mendrisio 1988.

b2) I think that White should prefer 10 Nf4, and play with the bishop-pair following 10...Bg6 11 Nxg6 hxg6 (**Diagram 12**).

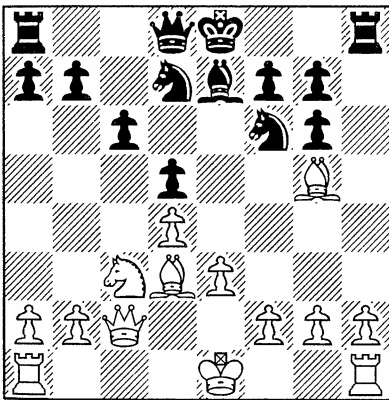


Diagram 12 (W)

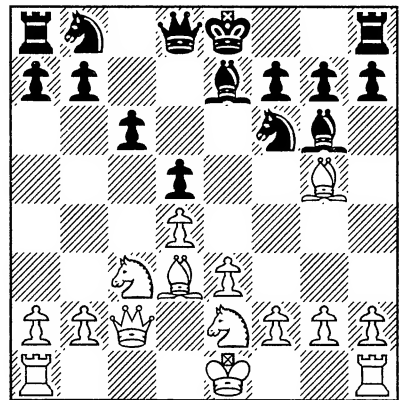


Diagram 13 (W)

As a general rule, White has more options in such positions, although Black is not in immediate danger. It's notable too that castling queenside becomes a serious possibility for both sides. One instructive example continued 12 0-0-0 Qa5 (otherwise 12...Nh5 13 Bxe7 Qxe7 14 Rde1 Nhf6 15 e4 dxe4 16 Nxe4 looks risky for Black) 13 Kb1 0-0-0 14 h3 Nf8 15 Bf4 Bd6 (for the record 15...Ne6 16 Be5 Bd6 17 Bxd6 Rxd6 would have given Black an extra tempo) 16 Bxd6 Rxd6 17 Ka1 Kb8 18 Rb1, and White kept some pressure in Z.Gyimesi-M.Born, Budapest 1994.

9 Nge2

As we have already seen in Glek-Yudasin, 9 Bxf6 Bxf6 10 f4!? is critical.

9...Bg6 (Diagram 13) 10 0-0

Alternatively:

a) By playing 10 Nf4, White threatens to capture on g6, thereby inducing 10...Bxd3, and then recaptures with 11 Nxd3. The knight is not badly placed here, but the exchange of light-squared bishops generally eases Black's defensive task as demonstrated in the following examples: 11...Nbd7 12 0-0 (or 12 h3 Nh5 13 Bxe7 Qxe7 14 b4 a6 15 0-0 0-0 16 a4 Nhf6 17 b5 cxb5 18 axb5 a5! 19 Qb3 Qd6 20 Ra2 Rfd8 21 Rfa1 b6 22 Nf4 Nf8, as in K.Bischoff-V.Peshekhonov, Bad Zwosten 2006, in which White had not obtained any advantage) 12...0-0 13 b4 Bd6!? 14 h3 (or 14 Bf4 Qe7 15 b5 Rfc8 16 Qb3 Nb6 17 Bxd6 Qxd6 18 bxc6 bxc6 19 Ne5 Rab8 20 Qc2 c5 21 Qf5 g6 22 Qf4 Qe6, and Black had even seized the initiative in B.Brkovic-R.Ilicic, Serbian Team Championship 2003) 14...h6 15 Bf4 Bxf4 16 Nxf4 Nb6 17 b5 Qd6 18 a4 a5 (**Diagram 14**) was about equal in R.Knaak-A.Negulescu, Yerevan 1988.

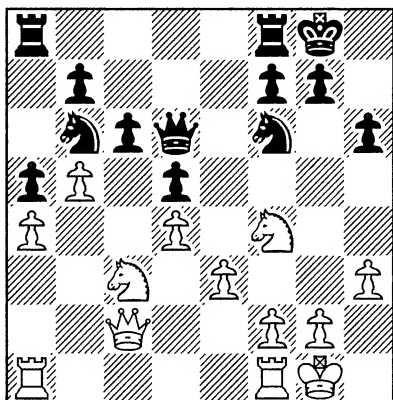


Diagram 14 (W)

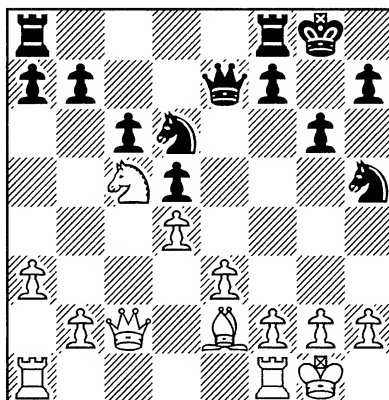


Diagram 15 (B)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! The minority attack is not dangerous if Black has control of the c4-square, which is a typical consequence of the early exchange of light-squared bishops.

b) Against 10 Ng3, the experienced Czech IM Eduard Prandstetter, who is a great fan of our ...Bg4 approach, has tried several ideas, but I think that the best of these is 10...Na6: for example, 11 a3 Nc7 12 Nf5 (or 12 0-0 Ne6 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 b4 Bxd3 15 Qxd3 0-0, with a solid game in B.Zueger-E.Prandstetter, Prague 1989) 12...Bxf5 13 Bxf5 Nh5 14 Bxe7 Qxe7 15 0-0 g6 16 Bd3 0-0 17 Na4 Ne8 18 Nc5 Nd6 19 Be2 (**Diagram 15**) was agreed drawn in S.Flohr-J.Rejfir, Marianske Lazne 1956. Note that Black's knight is pretty well placed on d6, covering several important

squares, including e4 and c4.

c) Finally, I don't think that White's most challenging continuation is 10 Bxg6 hxg6 11 Ng3 Nfd7 12 Bxe7 Qxe7 13 e4 dxe4 14 Qxe4 Nf6, and in this balanced position a draw was agreed in O.Gladyszev-P.Velikov, Poitou Charentes 2003.

Returning to 10 0-0:

10...Nbd7 11 f3 0-0 (Diagram 16)

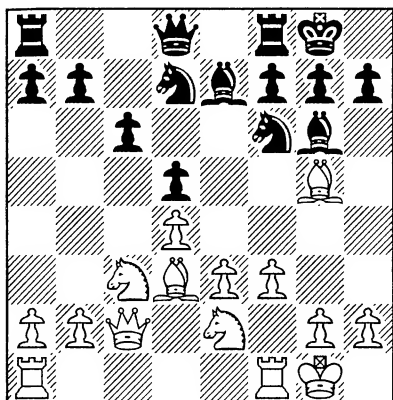


Diagram 16 (W)

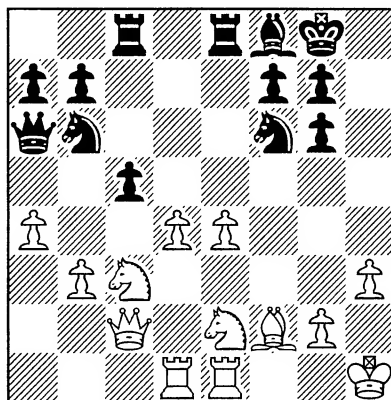


Diagram 17 (W)

12 Bxg6

After 12 e4 dxe4 13 fxe4 c5!, White's centre collapses because 14 d5? Nxd5! cheekily snatches a pawn, as Black did in V.Johansson-R.Vasquez, Istanbul Olympiad 2000.

12 ..hxg6 13 Rad1 Re8 14 Bh4 Nb6 15 Bf2 Qd7 16 h3

White is finally ready to expand in the centre.

16...Bb4!? 17 e4 dxe4 18 fxe4 Qe6 19 Rfe1 Qc4!?

More normal would be 19...Rad8 when White has slightly more options, but his centre can usually only be advanced under double-edged circumstances.

20 a3 Bf8 21 b3 Qa6 22 a4 Rac8 23 Kh1 c5! (Diagram 17)

Black correctly begins his counterplay. Now B.Ostenstad-D.Mastrovasilis, Calvia Olympiad 2004, continued 24 d5?! c4! 25 d6 cxb3 26 Qxb3 Nbd7 with a complex struggle, but one in which White was struggling due to his overextended central pawns.

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 c6 7 Qc2 Bg4 (Diagram 18)

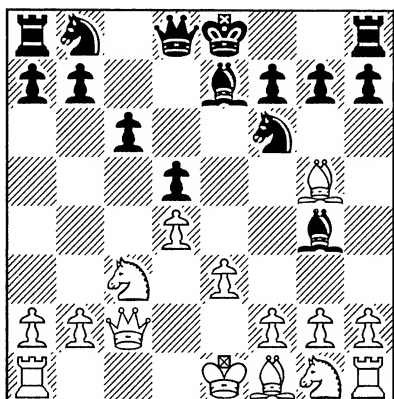


Diagram 18 (W)

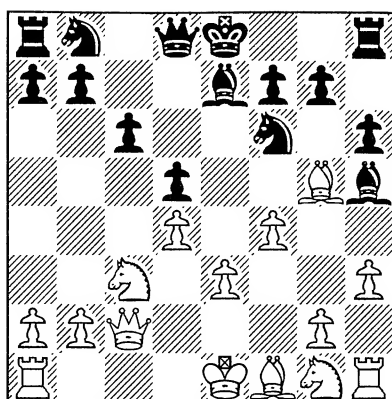


Diagram 19 (W)

8 h3!?

Recommended by ECO to harass the bishop. Otherwise, as well as 8 Bd3 which transposes to Line A, White might try:

a) 8 f3 Bh5 9 Nge2 Bg6 10 Qd2 h6 11 Bh4 Nbd7 12 Nf4 Bh7 13 Bf2 Bd6 14 g3 0-0 15 Bg2 (the bishop is generally not so great on g2) 15...Re8 16 0-0 Nb6 was K.Güldner-H.Schultz, German League 1992, in which Black was ready for anything.

b) 8 Nge2 h6 9 Bh4 Qd7!? (an original way of earning the right to play ...Bf5) 10 f3 Bf5 11 Qd2 Bh7 (with the sneaky threat of ...Ne4) 12 Bf2 0-0 13 Ng3 Bd6 14 Bd3 Bxd3 15 Qxd3 Bxg3 (an interesting option; Prandstetter avoids the possibility of the knight coming to f5) 16 hxg3 Na6 17 g4 Nh7 18 Rh5 Nb4 19 Qb1 a5 20 a3 Na6 21 Qd3 was F.Portisch-E.Prandstetter, Warsaw 1979, and Black can now obtain good counterplay with 21...b5.

8...Bh5!

Carrying on regardless.

9 f4 h6 (Diagram 19)

Now White faces an important choice:

a) 10 Bh4 keeps the dark-squared bishop, but after 10...Bg6 11 f5 Bh7 (but not 11...Ng4? 12 Bxe7 Nxe3, because of 13 Qd3 Qxe7 14 Kf2 when White wins material) 12 Bd3 Nbd7 13 Nf3 0-0 14 g4 c5 15 Qg2 cxd4 16 exd4 Nh5!, Black freed his position in S.Nachev-V.Burmakin, Moscow 2000.

b) White could try the simplifying 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 g4 Bg6 12 f5 Bh4+ 13 Kd2 Bh7 14 Nf3 0-0 15 Bd3 Nd7 16 Raf1 Re8 17 Nxh4 Qxh4 18 Rf3 Rad8, as he did in

B.Krutti-V.Emodi, Zemplen 1998. Black was then fully deployed except for his silly bishop on h7, which, however, can eventually be recycled with ...Kh8, ...f6 and ...Bg8.

Conclusion

A ...Bg4 strategy is a reasonable way to liven up the Exchange Variation. Delving into the variations, it becomes evident that White has no easy task to obtain anything more than the nominal edge that he can claim in the main lines. Indeed, a strategy based on ...Bg4 is fully playable against both 7 Bd3 and 7 Qc2. After the latter and 8 h3 you may suffer a few wry smiles from interested spectators, but I can't see anything fundamentally wrong with Black's position. True, the light-squared bishop has a temporary prison sentence, but White will have to spend time to ensure the safety of his king and cannot keep the centre under control indefinitely.

Chapter Ten

Livening Up the Exchange Variation: Part Two

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Bb4!? (Diagram 1)

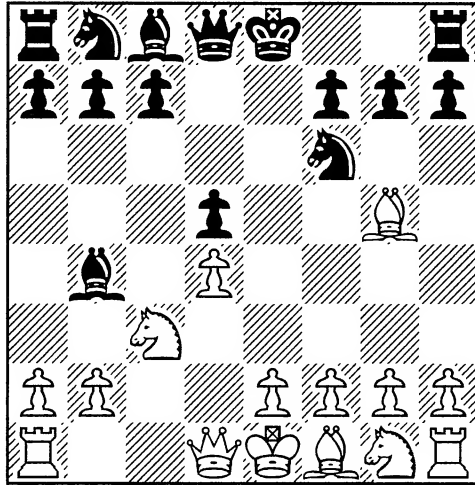


Diagram 1 (W)

The second of my suggested methods for spicing play up against the Exchange Variation again involves an active bishop development, and this time with ...Bb4. By refusing to break the pin on his f6-knight, Black already hints that he is looking

for a more active posture than the routine bishop development to e7.

It's useful to be aware that there will be a number of transpositional possibilities to the Nimzo-Indian (if White continues with 6 Qc2), and especially to the Ragozin Variation (if White plays 6 Nf3). Here's a game from the latter.

□ A.Ryskin ■ Y.Meister

Ceske Budejovice 1993

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 Bb4

The normal Ragozin move order.

5 cxd5 exd5 6 Bg5



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: I will be dealing with this position via the move order 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Bb4 6 Nf3.

6...h6 7 Bh4 g5 8 Bg3 Ne4 (Diagram 2)

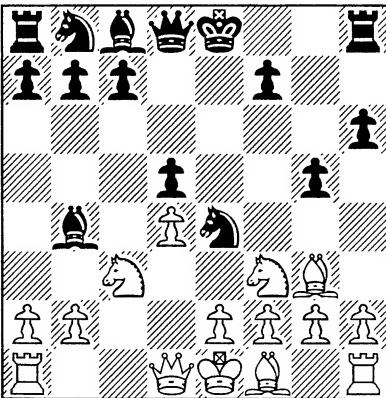


Diagram 2 (W)

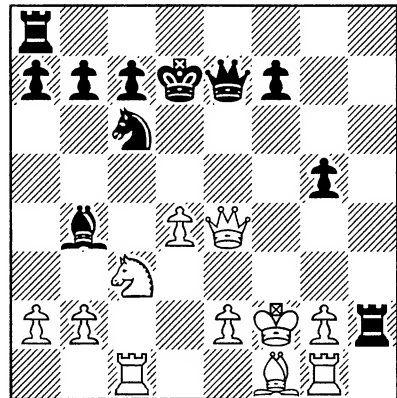


Diagram 3 (W)

9 Rc1

Nowadays 9 Nd2! is generally recognized as the best move, as we will see below.

9...h5! 10 Qa4+ Nc6 11 Ne5 Bd7 12 Qb3 Qe7

Black also got the better of the complications after 12...h4!? 13 Qxd5 Nd6 14 Nxd7 hxg3 15 Ne5 gxf2+ 16 Kxf2 Qf6+ 17 Qf3 Nxe5 18 dxe5 Qxe5 19 Nd5 0-0-0 in T.Bosboom Lanchava-B.Lalic, Benasque 1999.

13 Qxd5 h4 14 Qxe4 hxg3 15 Nxd7!

A cunning move.

15...Rxb2

After the slack 15...Qxe4?, due to the simple 16 Nf6+ Kf8 17 Nfxe4 White emerges with an extra piece.

16 Rg1 gxf2+ 17 Kxf2 Kxd7 (Diagram 3)

Material is equal, but can White do any better than exchanging queens?

18 Qf5+

It turns out that 18 Qxe7+ Bxe7 19 e3, with equal chances, was the most prudent course.

18...Qe6 19 Qxg5? Be7 20 d5

Not 20 Qd5+? Qxd5 21 Nxd5 Bh4+ 22 Kf3 Nxd4+ 23 Ke4 Bf2, as White's rook is trapped!

20...Bxg5 21 dxe6+ fxe6 22 e3 Rf8+

Black uses his lead in development to seize the initiative.

23 Ke2 Nd4+!

In fact Black can win the exchange with 23...Ne5!? 24 Ne4 Nf3, but the question arises after 25 Nxb5 Nxb5+ 26 Kd3: how does the knight escape?

24 Kd3 Nf5 25 Be2

Leaving the e-pawn to its fate, as 25 Re1 is strongly met by 25...Bh4.

25...Bxe3 26 Rh1 Rxb2 27 Rcf1 Bb6 28 Bf3 Rxb2 29 Bxb7

Two extra pawns are too much for White to defend against, even with the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.

29...Ke7 30 Rh7+ Rf7 31 Rxf7+ Kxf7 32 Ba6 Ke7 33 Re1 Rh2 34 Nd5+ Kd6 35 Nf4 e5 36 Re2 Rh6! (Diagram 4)

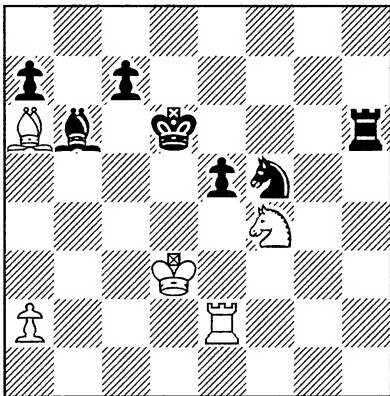


Diagram 4 (W)

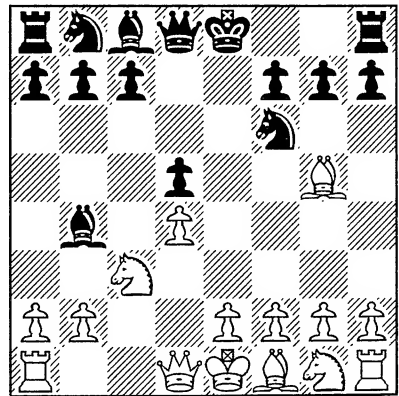


Diagram 5 (W)

It's simpler for Black to keep the rooks on the board as White is then less likely to be able to blockade the light squares.

37 Ng2 Rh3+ 38 Kc4 Rg3 39 Bb7 c6

Renewing the threat of 40...Rxc2!

40 Ne1 Nd4 41 Rh2 e4 42 Nc2 Nxc2 43 Rxc2 Kc7

Suddenly the bishop is trapped.

44 Ba6 Ra3 45 Bb5 Ra5! 0-1

Looking a Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Bb4!? (Diagram 5)

White has several options, but the struggle comes down to the same thing: can Black benefit from the pin on the c3-knight, or is White able to demonstrate a downside to this precocious activity?

White's main possibilities are:

A: 6 e3

B: 6 Qc2

C: 6 Qb3

D: 6 Nf3

There's also:

a) 6 Rc1 and after the logical 6...h6 7 Bh4 (Black is very solid after 7 Bxf6 Qxf6 8 a3 Bxc3+ 9 Rxc3 c6) 7...g5 8 Bg3 Ne4 9 e3 h5, play has transposed to note 'c' to White's 9th move in Line A.

b) 6 Qa4 Nc6 7 e3 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 Bg3 Ne4 also takes us into Line A. Instead 8 Bxf6 Qxf6 9 Rc1 0-0 10 a3 Bxc3+ 11 Rxc3 Re8 12 Nf3 Bg4 13 Be2 Bxf3 14 gxf3 Re6 (**Diagram 6**) was reasonable enough for Black in S.Djuric-I.Efimov, Cutro 2002.

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Bb4 6 e3 h6!

Another way Black can try and mix things involves ...c5 and ...Qa5. However, White has generally scored well after 6...Nbd7 7 Bd3 c5 8 Nge2 0-0 9 0-0 c4 10 Bc2 Qa5 and I am not that taken with that variation.

7 Bh4

The quiet 7 Bxf6 shouldn't be too dangerous so long as Black is patient: for example, 7...Qxf6 8 Qb3 Qd6 (instead 8...c5?! looks too risky to me and after 9 dxc5 Nc6 10 0-0-0 Qxf2 11 Nxd5, White was better in the complications of C.Derieux-

L.Verat, Clichy 1999) 9 a3 Bxc3+ 10 Qxc3 0-0 (or perhaps 10...a5!? 11 Nf3 0-0 12 Bd3 Nd7 13 0-0 c6 14 b4 axb4 15 axb4 Rxa1 16 Rxa1, which restricted White to just a slight pull in T.Ghitescu-V.Kovacevic, Rovinj/Zagreb 1970) 11 Bd3 Bg4 12 Ne2 Nd7 13 0-0 b6 14 b4 c5 (**Diagram 7**).

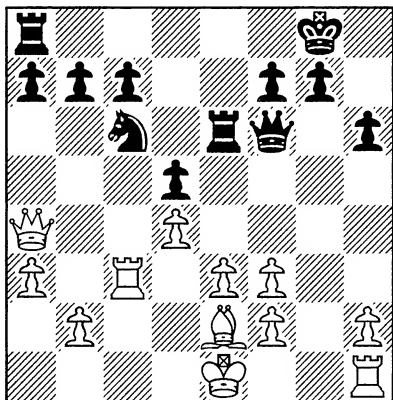


Diagram 6 (W)

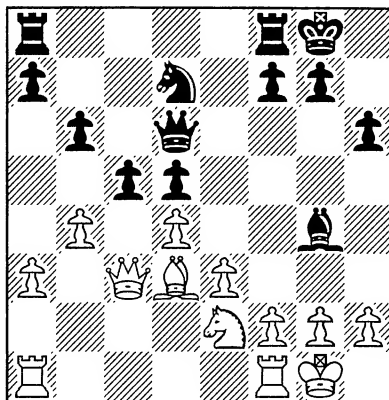


Diagram 7 (W)

In R.Keene-V.Inkiov, Skara 1980, Black was soon able to nullify any white advantage: 15 bxc5 bxc5 16 dxc5 Nxc5 17 Nd4 Rac8 18 Bf5 Ne6 19 Qb4 Qxb4 20 axb4 Bxf5 21 Nxf5 Rc7 22 Rfc1 Rb7 and a draw was agreed.

7...g5!

I prefer this to 7...c5 which seems to favour the first player: 8 Bb5+ (or 8 dxc5 Nbd7 9 Bb5 Qa5 10 Bxd7+ Nxd7 11 Nge2 Qxc5 12 0-0 Nb6 13 Rc1 0-0 14 Na4 Qa5 15 Nxb6 axb6 16 a3 Bd6, as in D.Harika-H.Koneru, Dubai 2007, in which White was left with the advantage due to her better pawn structure) 8...Bd7 9 Bxd7+ Nbx7 10 Nge2 0-0 11 0-0 Bxc3 12 Nxc3 Qa5 13 dxc5 Qxc5 14 Rc1 Rac8, with a shade of an edge to White, as in V.Bagirov-E.Mortensen, Riga 1981.

8 Bg3 Ne4 (Diagram 8)

9 Qa4+

Whether this is best isn't clear and several other moves have been tried:

a) 9 Qc2 transposes to Line D.

b) The active 9 Nge2 h5! 10 h4 Nxc3 11 Nxc3 gxh4! 12 Nxh5 Qg5 13 Qa4+ Nc6 14 Bb5 Bxc3+ 15 bxc3 Rxh5 16 Bxc6+ Kd8, with chances for both sides, was seen in R.Calvo Minguez-T.Ghitescu, Havana Olympiad 1966.

c) 9 Rc1 h5 (naturally!) 10 f3 (also equal was 10 Qa4+ Nc6 11 Bb5 Bd7 12 Nge2 Bxc3+ 13 bxc3 h4 14 Be5 f6 15 f3 a6 16 Bxc6 Bxc6 17 Qc2 fxe5 18 fxe4 Qe7 in

H.Lindberg-J.Lundin, Hallstarhammar 2004) 10...Nxc3 11 hxg3 c5 12 Bd3 Nd7 13 Nge2 Nf6 14 Kf2 Qe7 15 Qc2 Bd7 16 Bf5 0-0-0 17 Bxd7+ Rxd7 18 Qd3 Kb8 19 g4 Rdd8, with a balanced game in B.Lalic-J.Klovans, Berlin 1998.

d) 9 Qb3!? is murky and now:

d1) 9...c5 10 Bxb8 Rxb8 11 Bb5+ Kf8 12 Bd3 Bf5 13 dxc5 Qa5 14 Bxe4 Bxe4 15 f3 Bg6, as in R.Paramos Dominguez-O.Rodriguez, Spanish Team Championship 1996, is given as unclear by ECO. However, following 16 Nge2 Qxc5 17 Kf2 Re8 18 Nxd5 Bd2 19 Rac1! White was doing well in the complications, so this needs some refining for Black.

d2) In a later game, Paramos Dominguez faced 9...Bxc3+!? 10 bxc3 h5 11 f3 Nxc3 12 hxg3 Qd6 13 0-0-0 Nc6 14 e4 dxe4 15 Bc4 (R.Paramos Dominguez-N.Delgado, Santa Clara 1999), when Black could have obtained a reasonable position if he had followed up with 15...Qe7! (**Diagram 9**).

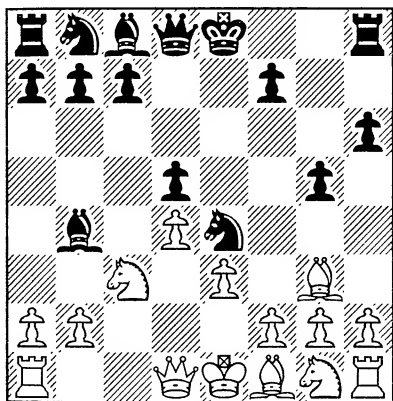


Diagram 8 (W)

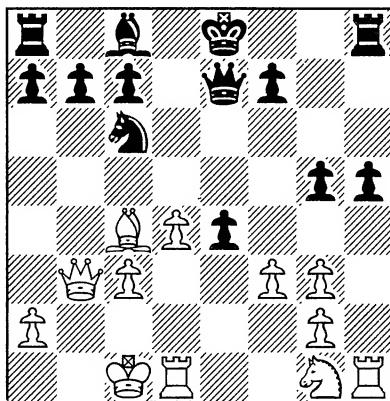


Diagram 9 (W)

In this extremely unbalanced position, both 16 Re1 e3 and 16 fxe4 Bd7 17 Bd3 0-0-0 leave matters far from clear.

9...Nc6 10 Bb5 Bd7 11 Nge2 a6

Simple and good. Possible too, however, is 11...h5 12 f3 Nxc3 13 hxg3 a6 14 Bxc6 Bxc3+ 15 Nxc3 Bxc6 16 Qc2 Qf6, as in D.Glavas-S.Rezan, Kastav 2002, when Black also seems to be OK.

12 Bxc6 Bxc3+ 13 Nxc3 Bxc6 14 Qc2 Qe7 15 Nxe4 dxe4 16 h4 0-0-0 17 0-0-0 g4 (Diagram 10)

Black has achieved equal chances as he has a solid blockade on the light squares, P.Eljanov-S.Movsesian, Russian Team Championship 2006.

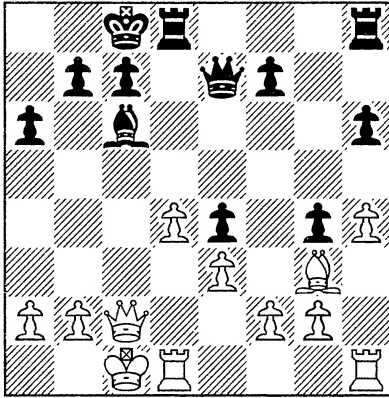


Diagram 10 (W)

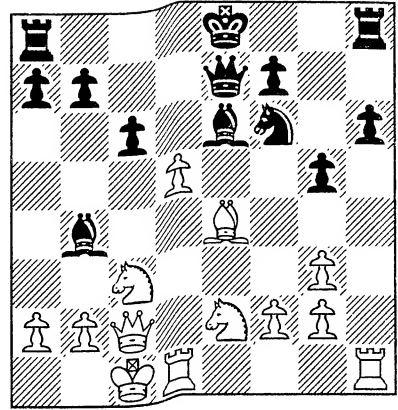


Diagram 11 (B)

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Bb4 6 Qc2



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: This brings us into the realm of the Nimzo-Indian, with the standard move order being 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5 5 cxd5 exd5 6 Bg5.

6...h6 7 Bxf6

Far sharper play arises from 7 Bh4 g5 8 Bg3 Ne4 9 e3, and now Black can play 9...h5. A much less theoretical, more unusual and worthwhile idea is 9...Be6!?: for example, 10 Bd3 Nxc3 11 hxg3 Nd7 12 Nge2 c6 13 0-0-0 Qe7 14 e4 dxe4 15 Bxe4 Nf6 16 d5 (**Diagram 11**) 16...cxd5 (another way to equalize is 16...Nxe4 17 Qxe4 Bxd5 18 Nxd5 cxd5 19 Qxd5 0-0) 17 Bxd5 Bxc3 18 Nxc3 Nxd5 19 Nxd5 Bxd5 20 Rxd5 0-0, and chances were balanced in the heavyweight clash, A.Beliavsky-I.Sokolov, Yugoslav Team Championship 1995.

7...Qxf6 8 a3 Bxc3+ 9 Qxc3 0-0 10 e3 Bf5 11 Ne2

Too risky is 11 Qxc7?! because after 11...Nc6 12 Nf3 Rfc8 13 Qf4 Na5 14 Nd2 Rc2, Black was on top in S.Meenakshi-A.Ramaswamy, Calicut 2003.

11...Rc8 12 Ng3 (Diagram 12)

Black can now play conventionally and solidly with 12...Bg6 13 b4 a5, but a more interesting way is 12...c5!?: for example, 13 Nxf5 Qxf5 14 dxc5 b6 15 Bd3 Qg5 16 0-0 bxc5 17 Bb5 a6 18 Be2 Nd7 19 Rfd1 Nf6 saw the presence of hanging pawns offer chances for both sides in Y.Seirawan-T.Wedberg, New York 1989.

C) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Bb4 6 Qb3 (Diagram 13)

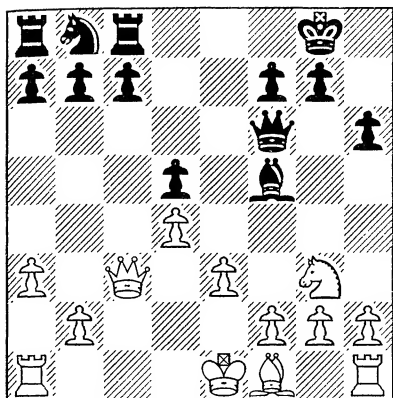


Diagram 12 (B)

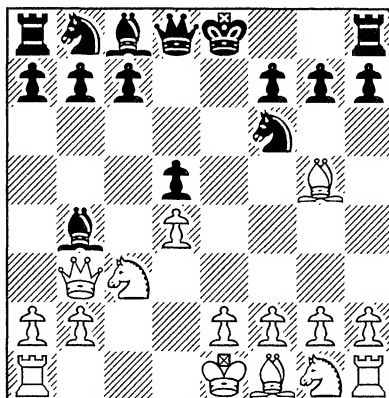


Diagram 13 (B)

A slightly annoying move for Black to face.

6...Nc6

It's also possible to simplify with 6...Bxc3+ and now:

a) The obvious recapture would seem to be 7 Qxc3, which gives White an extra tempo over an analogous position in the Nimzo-Indian as he hasn't been obliged to play a3. However Black may be able to live with this fact as after 7...0-0 8 e3 Bf5! (taking the opportunity to place the bishop on a key diagonal), none of White's options offer much advantage for the first player:

a1) 9 Qb3 c5! and White won't be able to keep control.

a2) 9 Bxf6 Qxf6 10 Qxc7 Nc6 11 a3 Rac8 12 Qf4 Na5, and Black has plenty of activity for his pawn.

a3) 9 Nf3 Nbd7 10 Be2 c6 11 0-0, when there is the choice between trying to simplify with 11...Ne4!? (or if you prefer 11...h6 12 Bh4 Ne4), and continuing with 11...Re8, when White has the bishop-pair but Black has well-organized pieces.

a4) 9 Ne2 (probably best) 9...Nbd7 10 Ng3 Bg6 11 Be2 c6 12 0-0 h6 13 Bf4, with a small edge due to the bishop-pair.

b) Otherwise 7 bxc3 Nbd7 8 e3 0-0 9 Nf3 c5 (**Diagram 14**) grants White the bishop-pair and a seemingly promising set-up, but things are not that clear: 10 Nd2 Qa5 11 Be2 Re8 in V.Jürgens-B.Trabert, Graz 1993, and the 10 Bxf6 Nxf6 11 dxc5 Qe7 12 Bd3 Qxc5 13 0-0 b6 14 Qb4 Qc7 15 c4 dxc4 16 Qxc4 Qxc4 17 Bxc4 Bb7 of O.Pavlenko-I.Badjarani, Baku 2001, both proved adequate for the second player.



ROLL THE DICE! Black can also consider 6...c5!? even if this may be somewhat hard to believe in!

After 7 dxc5 Nc6 8 e3 Qa5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 (**Diagram 15**), White can try either 10 Rc1 d4 11 exd4 Nxd4 12 Qd5 Qxc5 13 Qxc5 Bxc5 14 Nd5 Bd6, when Black's activity should keep him afloat, or 10 0-0-0!? Bxc3 11 bxc3 Be6, when although my computer prefers White, things hardly look clear to me with White's king being the more vulnerable.

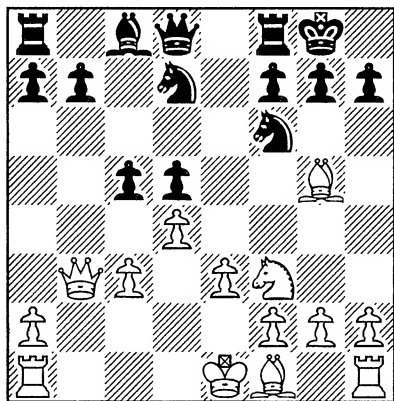


Diagram 14 (W)

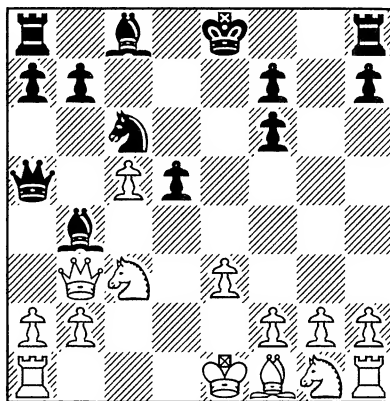


Diagram 15 (W)

Returning to the more straightforward 6...Nc6:

7 e3 0-0!?

Black could try the immediate 7...h6?!, but this provokes 8 Bxf6 Qxf6 9 Qxd5, which is a slightly optimistic pawn sacrifice compared with our main line. Instead, defending the d-pawn with 7...Be6 comes into consideration: 8 Bb5 Be7! (although 8...0-0?! has been played, I don't believe it after 9 Bxc6 Bxc3+ 10 Qxc3 bxc6, as White has the simple 11 Qxc6!) 9 Nf3 (9 Nge2 is similar) 9...0-0 10 0-0 Na5 11 Qc2 c6 12 Bd3 h6 13 Bh4 Nc4, when even if Black isn't fully equal, he has a respectable position.

8 Nf3

White has chances to keep a pull with 8 Bd3 Be6 9 Nge2!? h6 10 Bh4 Bd6 11 a3 as Black's rather pseudo-active pieces are not on their most solid squares.

8...h6 9 Bxf6 Qxf6 10 Qxd5

This transposes to a line of the Ragozin where Black has interesting play for the pawn.

10...Be6 (Diagram 16)

Now 11 Qh5 Rad8 12 Be2 Rd5 13 Qh4 g5 14 Qg3 Qg6 offers Black compensation according to Ribli. That may well be so, but really could do with a test. Otherwise,

11 Qb5 a6 12 Qd3 (12 Qxb7?! is too risky for White due to 12...Bd5) 12...Rad8 should give Black good practical compensation.

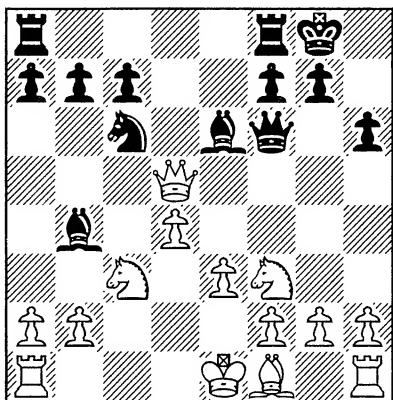


Diagram 16 (W)

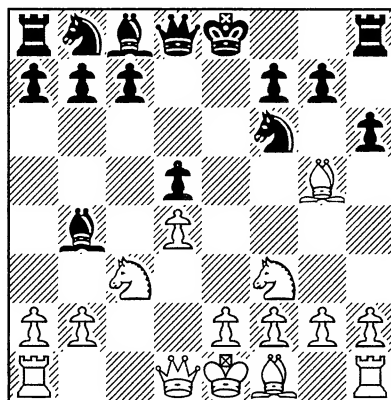


Diagram 17 (W)

D) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 Bb4 6 Nf3



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: White enters the Ragozin variation which usually occurs via 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Bb4 5 cxd5 exd5 6 Bg5.

6...h6 (Diagram 17) 7 Bh4

After 7 Bxf6 Qxf6 the game is more positional:

a) 8 e3 c5 9 Rc1 c4 10 Nd2 Bxc3 11 bxc3 0-0 12 g3 Bf5 13 Bg2 Qe6 14 0-0 Bd3 15 Re1 f5 (Diagram 18) was quite complex in V.Popov-A.Aleksandrov, St Petersburg 1998, but Black had activated his bishop and restrained White's thematic e4-advance.

b) 8 Qb3 c5 9 e3 0-0 10 dxc5 Bxc3+ 11 Qxc3 Qxc3+ 12 bxc3 Be6 13 Nd4 Rc8 14 Rb1 Nd7! 15 c4 Nxc5 16 Nxe6 fxe6 17 cxd5 exd5 18 Be2 Ne4 was about equal in P.Tregubov-A.Aleksandrov, Serbian Team Championship 2002.

c) 8 Rc1 0-0 9 a3 Bxc3+ 10 Rxc3 c6 11 e3 a5 12 Be2 Bf5 13 0-0 Nd7 (Black has comfortable development) 14 Ne1 Qe7 15 Nd3 Nf6 16 Nc5 Ne4, and White was unable to make progress in J.Bonin-B.Zuckerman, New York 1985.

7...g5 8 Bg3 Ne4 9 Nd2!

A sharp pawn sacrifice. Instead 9 Rc1 h5! gives Black good chances, as we saw in Ryskin-Meister.

9...Nxc3 10 bxc3 Bxc3 11 Rc1 Bb2 12 Bxc7

Less testing is 12 Rxc7 Na6 13 Rc2 Bxd4 14 e3 Bg7 15 Bxa6 bxa6, with equality as in V.Epishin-G.Sosonko, Ter Apel 1992.

12...Qe7 13 Bd6 Qe6 (Diagram 19)

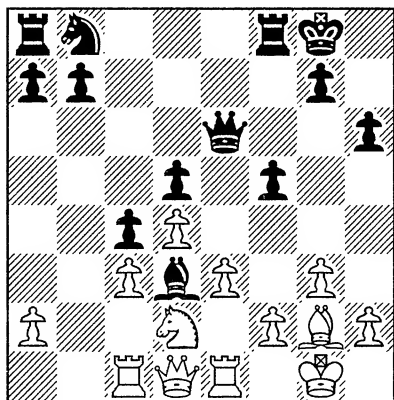


Diagram 18 (W)

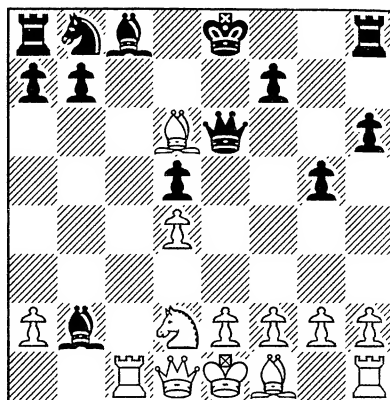


Diagram 19 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! This is a complicated variation in which the less-well prepared player is the most at risk. Will your Exchange Variation-loving opponent also be familiar with the subtleties of this sharp Ragozin line?

This double-edged variation has been investigated by some strong grandmasters. Experience suggests that the following continuation is critical: 14 Rb1 Bc3 15 Ba3 Nc6 16 e3 Bxd4 17 Bb5 Be5 18 0-0 Bd6 (Black needs to make this manoeuvre because otherwise his king will be stuck in the centre) 19 Bxd6 Qxd6 20 Ne4 Qe5 21 Qxd5 Qxd5 22 Nf6+ Kf8 23 Rxd5 Ne7 24 Nc7 Rb8 25 f4 Bf5 26 e4 Bxe4 27 Rbe1 was I.Sokolov-A.Onischuk, Poikovsky 2006, and now Ftacnik suggests 27...Bc6 with equal chances.

Conclusion

Those players who choose to play the Exchange Variation with White are typically those who like to keep things simple and under control. I believe that the tense lines with 5...Bb4 outlined in this chapter create new problems for White, and are thus more likely to throw him off the straight and narrow.

Chapter Eleven

Shocking the QGD

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Be7 5 g4!? (Diagram 1)

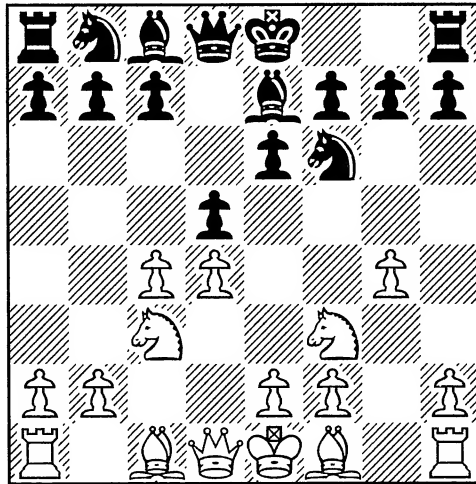


Diagram 1 (B)

The venerable Queen's Gambit Declined is not at all an easy opening to shock, but perhaps this rare g-pawn thrust might just do it. Of course, an early g2-g4 advance is all the rage in many openings (apart from the Sicilian, it is regularly seen in the

Anti-Meran Semi-Slav and has given White a whole new weapon against the Nimzo-English, namely the Krasenkow-Zvjaginsev Attack: 1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e6 3 Nf3 Bb4 4 g4!?), but can it really work against the solid QGD?



ROLL THE DICE! I believe that this line is fully viable, as well as psychologically unsettling for Black to face, but many more games are needed before we can reach a definite verdict.

Indeed, I've only been able to find six games with 5 g4 and so it should especially appeal to those who like to go their own way early on.

□ L.G.Eklund ■ B.Joderberg

Swedish League 2003

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Be7 5 g4 Nc6 (Diagram 2)

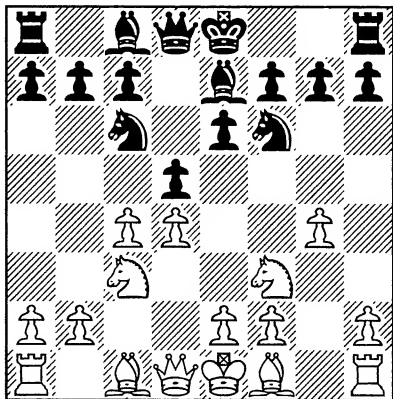


Diagram 2 (W)

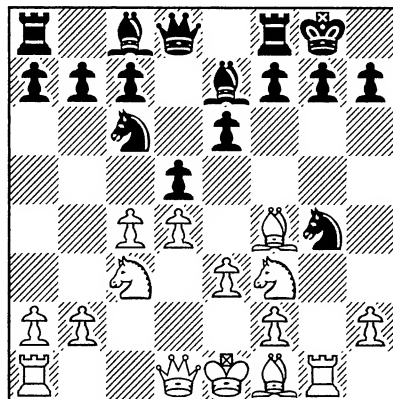


Diagram 3 (B)

An early ...Nc6, blocking Black's counterplay-gaining c-pawn, is rarely a good idea in the QGD. I don't think that the present case is an exception, but players may be drawn to 5...Nc6 by the desire to gain early central counterplay. That's an admirable aim, but Black is better off beginning with 5...0-0, as we'll see below.

6 Rg1

Another Scandinavian game varied with 6 Bf4 0-0 7 h3.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: I suppose that this position might also occur via a 5 Bf4 0-0 6 h3!? Nc6?! 7 g4 move order.

Here 7...dxc4! 8 e3 (and not 8 e4?! Bb4) 8...Nd5 must be critical, whereas 7...Ne4 8 e3 Nxc3?! 9 bxc3 b6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 Qc2 gave White the upper hand in K.Christensen-G.Gulbrandsen, Norway 2001: with g2-g4 most certainly not out of place here, White enjoys good central control and prospects to expand further on the kingside.

More in the spirit of our bold g4-thrust is to continue sacrificing the pawn with 7 e3!?, instead of Christensen's 7 h3. Black may well not dare to take the pawn, but if he does 7...Nxc4 8 Rg1 (**Diagram 3**) will supply reasonable compensation: for example, 8...Nf6 9 Bh6 Ne8 10 Qc2, followed by queenside castling with decent attacking chances, or 8...f5 9 cxd5 exd5 10 Qb3!?, when play can quickly become quite forcing with 10...Nf6 11 Bh6! Ng4 12 Nxd5 Be6 13 Nxe7+ Qxe7 14 d5 Qb4+ 15 Qxb4 Nxb4 dxe6 Nc2+ 17 Ke2 Nxa1 18 Bf4 Nc2 19 Kd2 Nb4 20 Bc4 (**Diagram 4**), which sees White emerging from the complications with good compensation for the exchange in the shape of his unopposed bishops, activity and strong passed pawn.

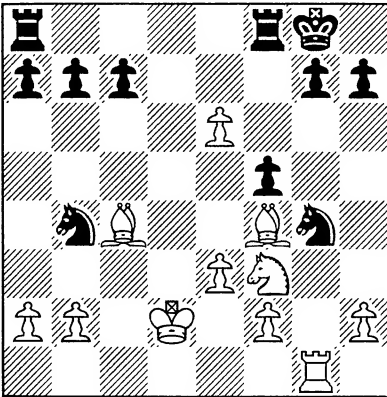


Diagram 4 (B)

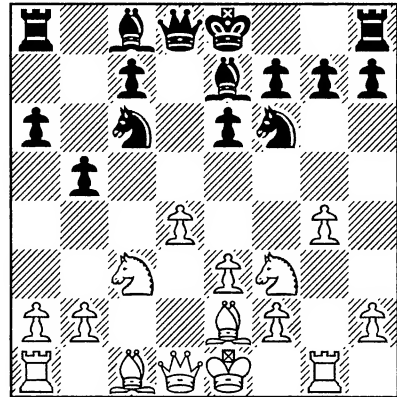


Diagram 5 (B)

6...a6

Black wants to capture on c4 and expand in Semi-Slav style with ...b5. A reasonable aim, but if he wanted to play thus, why did he begin with ...Nc6? Already we can see the effects of the confusion caused by 5 g4. Nevertheless, I'm not too sure what Black should play, whereas White's plan is clear: to castle long and attack. Maybe 6...0-0 7 e3 b6 might be tried, although White keeps a pull with 8 Bd2 Bb7 9 cxd5 exd5 10 Bd3.

7 e3 dxc4 8 Bxc4 b5 9 Be2! (Diagram 5)

A stronger retreat than going to d3: from there the bishop might be hassled by ...Nb4, and on e2 it covers the f3-knight, thereby allowing White to move his queen. If this all sounds familiar it is: Eklund is applying similar ideas to those

found in the closely-related Shirov-Shabalov Gambit (1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Qc2 Bd6 7 g4!?).

9...Bb7 10 g5 Nd5 11 Ne4!?

Keeping pieces on to emphasize the hole on c5. Already it's noticeable that White doesn't have to go all in with a kingside attack, as he can also follow up the cramping g4-g5 with a more positional approach.

11...Nb6 12 Qc2 Nb4 13 Qb1 c5?! (Diagram 6)

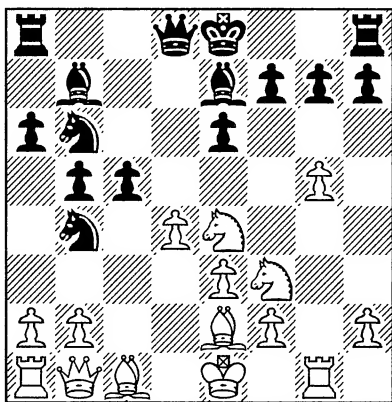


Diagram 6 (W)

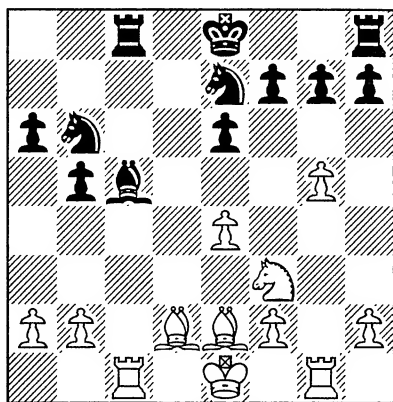


Diagram 7 (W)

Joderberg probably thought that it was now or never for ...c5. Eklund, however, has everything under control, having seen that to force through ...c5, Black must part company with his important light-squared bishop...

14 dxc5?!

...except that this isn't the way! Correct was 14 a3 Bxe4 15 Qxe4 N4d5 (or 15...Qd5 16 Qxd5 N4xd5 17 e4 Nc7 18 Bf4, with a pleasant bishop-pair advantage) 16 dxc5 Bxc5 17 b4 Be7 18 Bb2, leaving all White's pieces ideally situated.

14...Bxe4?!

Too simplistic. Instead the situation would have been rather unclear after 14...Na4 15 Bd2 Nxc5 16 Nxc5 Bxc5 17 a3 Nd5 18 Qe4!? Qe7 19 Qh4.

15 Qxe4 Bxc5 16 Bd2 Qd5 17 Qxd5 N4xd5 18 Rc1



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Black might have avoided coming under a nasty attack, but this has come at some cost. Reeling ever since 5 g4, Joderberg has only got the queens off by ceding the bishop-pair, as well as plenty of kingside space.

18...Rc8 19 e4 Ne7 (Diagram 7) 20 a4!?

A tactical way of exploiting Black's queenside weaknesses, not that there was any need to hurry.

20...Nxa4 21 b3 Nb6 22 Ra1 Ra8

Probably a better defence was 22...0-0!?, restricting White to just an edge after 23 b4 (or 23 Rxa6 b4 24 Bb5 f5! 25 gxf6 Rxf6 with some counterplay) 23...Bd6 24 Rxa6 Rb8.

23 b4

More precise was 23 Rxa6!, retaining pawns on both flanks (which should help the bishops), after which Black's activity down the a-file doesn't really lead anywhere following 23...0-0 24 Bxb5 Rxa6 25 Bxa6 Ra8 26 Bb5 Ra2 27 Ke2.

23...Bd6 24 Rxa6 Rxa6 25 Bxb5+ Kd8?

Acquiescing to the loss of a pawn. Presumably Black didn't like the look of 25...Nc6 26 Bxa6 Nxb4 27 Bb5+ Ke7 28 Ke2, when he might easily drop a piece, but he should have tried this and then grovelled with 28...Rc8 29 Rb1 Nc6 30 Be3 Nd7, with fair chances to hold as all the remaining pawns are on the same flank.

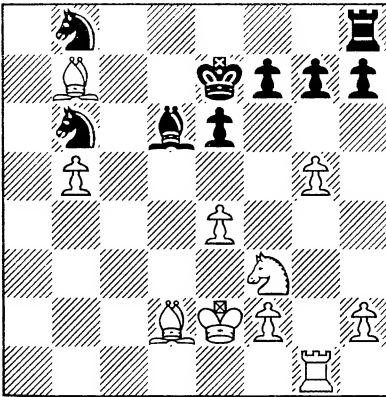
26 Bxa6 Nc6 27 Ke2 Ke7 28 b5 Nb8 29 Bb7 (Diagram 8)

Diagram 8 (B)

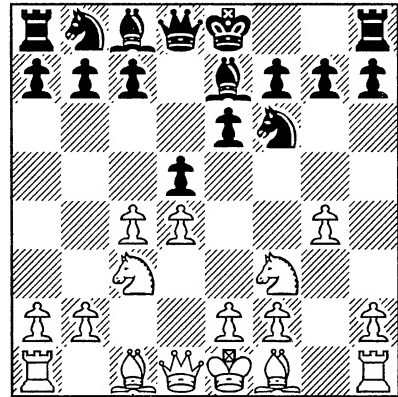


Diagram 9 (B)

Black hopes to maintain his blockade of the b-pawn, but there is also the kingside to worry about. In the game, the technique of the 2275-rated white player proved to be up to the task:

29...N8d7 30 Ra1 Bc5 31 Bc3 f6 32 gxf6+ gxf6 33 Rg1 Kf7 34 Ng5+ Ke7 35 Nf3 Kf7 36 Ng5+ Ke7 37 Nh3! Kf7 38 Nf4 e5?! 39 Nd5 Rg8 40 Rg3 Rxd5 41 hxd5 42 Bxd5+ Kg6 43 f4 Bd6 44 Kf3 Nb6 45 Be6 h5 46 Bd2 Na4 47 f5+ Kg7 48 Bb3 Nb6 49

Be3 Bc7 50 Ke2 Nc8 51 Be6 Nb6 52 Kd3 Bd8 53 Kc3 Kf8 54 Kb4 Ke8 55 Kc5 Na4+ 56 Kc6 Nc3 57 Bd5! Ne2 58 b6 Bxb6 59 Bxb6 Nxb3 60 Kd6 h4 61 Bf2 Kf8 62 Ke6 Kg7 63 Ke7 1-0

Looking a Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Be7 5 g4 (Diagram 9)

As well as the 5...Nc6 of Eklund-Joderberg, Black has a number of different approaches in this uncharted position:

A: 5...0-0

B: 5...c6

C: 5...h6

D: 5...dxc4

E: 5...c5!?

F: 5...Nxb3!?

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Be7 5 g4 0-0

This is very logical and was the choice of Alexei Shchekachev, the only grandmaster (so far) to have been confronted by 5 g4. Many players might be scared of castling into a prospective attack, but White must develop some pieces before he can attack and that allows Black time to instigate counterplay in the centre.

6 Qc2

Covering the e4-square and preparing to go long, but Eklund has again preferred to support his g-pawn at this juncture. L.G.Eklund-C.Cranbourne, correspondence 2003, continued 6 Rg1!? c5 7 dxc5 Bxc5 8 e3 (**Diagram 10**) 8...Ne4 (a more simplistic measure would be 8...dxc4, but after 9 Bxc4 Qxd1+ 10 Kxd1 Nc6 11 Ke2, White isn't too unhappy with this queenless middlegame: his king is well placed on e2, g4-g5 will gain further kingside space and he might expand on the queenside too with a3 and b4), and now 9 Qc2 (9 Nxe4 dxe4 10 Qxd8 Rxd8 created a few problems in the game: ...f5 is next up, but surely White moved his knight, rather than play the astonishing 11 a3?? exf3 and 0-1 according to one correspondence database) 9...Nxc3 (or 9...Qa5 10 cxd5 exd5 11 Bd2!? Nxd2 12 Nxd2 Bb4 13 Bd3, with quite unclear play) 10 Qxc3 Nc6 11 Bd2! Bb4 12 Qc2 would have been fairly unclear.

6...dxc4

A principled alternative is 6...Nxb3, as Black chose in R.Salvador-I.Capata, Salsomaggiore Terme 2005.

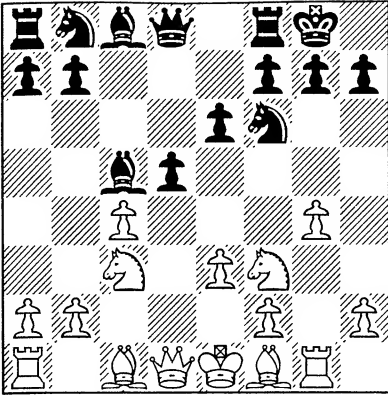


Diagram 10 (B)

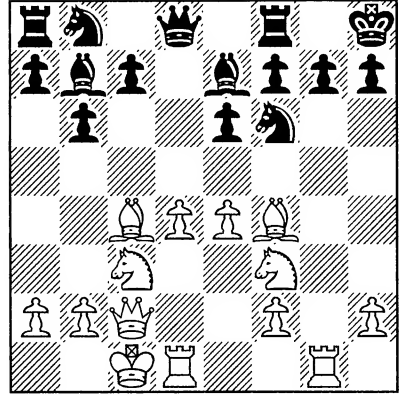


Diagram 11 (B)



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: So far this is the only game to have transposed to our aggressive variation via a 5 Qc2 0-0 6 g4!? move order.

Following 7 e4 dxe4 8 Qxe4 f5! 9 Qc2 Bh4!? 10 Nxh4 Qxh4 11 Bg2 Na6 12 a3 Rd8 13 h3 Nf6, the position wasn't at all clear, but Black's central pressure was fairly awkward.

Thus I would prefer to play à la Eklund with Olthof's suggestion of 7 Rg1 Nf6 8 Bh6. Play might continue 8...Ne8 9 0-0-0 Kh8 (and not 9...c5? 10 cxd5 exd5 11 dxc5, when the sudden opening of the d-file creates serious problems for Black) 10 Bf4 Nf6 11 e3 b6 12 Bd3 (12 Ne5!? is a decent alternative) 12...dxc4 13 Bxc4 Bb7 14 e4 **(Diagram 11)**, when White's strong centre, extra space and the half-open g-file supply full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

7 e4

Another idea which needs exploring is 7 g5!? Nd5 8 e4, intending 8...Nb6 (or 8...Nb4 9 Qb1 N8c6 10 a3 Na6 11 Be3 Na5 12 Qa2, followed by regaining the pawn) 9 Be3 Nc6 10 0-0-0 with sharp play for the pawn. Here Black's extra c-pawn is quite a useful asset, but of no less importance are the facts that he is rather cramped and that a rapid h4-h5 is on the cards.

7...Nc6 8 g5 Nd7 9 Bxc4 Nb6 (Diagram 12) 10 Ne2

The only mention of 5 g4 which I have been able to find in a number of books, magazines and databases is a contribution in the forum section of *New in Chess Yearbook 67*, which emphasizes just how much of a shock your opponent is likely to have when hit by 5 g4! In that respected theoretical journal, René Olthof proposed here the sensible 10 Be2!? Nxd4 11 Nxd4 Qxd4 12 Nb5, aiming to regain the

pawn after 12...Bb4+ (12...Qd8!? 13 Qxc7 Bd7 is a sharper approach, after which the prudent 14 Qxd8 Rfxd8 15 Be3 leads to rough equality) 13 Kf1 Qc5 14 Qxc5 Bxc5 15 Nxc7 Rb8 and now, rather than his 16 Kg2, I slightly prefer 16 Bf4! (**Diagram 13**) with some chances for an edge, partly due to the weakness of the d6-square. Black might now be tempted by 16...Bd7 17 Nb5 e5!?, but after 18 Bxe5 Rbe8 19 Bd6! Bxb5 (or 19...Bxd6 20 Nxd6 Bh3+ 21 Ke1 Re6 22 Rd1 Bg2 23 Rg1 Bxe4 24 Nxe4 Rxe4 25 Rg4 Re7 26 Kf1, again with a bishop versus knight advantage in the endgame) 20 Bxc5 Bxe2+ 21 Kxe2 Rxe4+ 22 Kf3, White's superior minor piece should not be discounted, especially as it's not so easy for Black to make use of his small, short-term initiative after 22...Rfe8 23 Rac1 R4e5 24 h4.

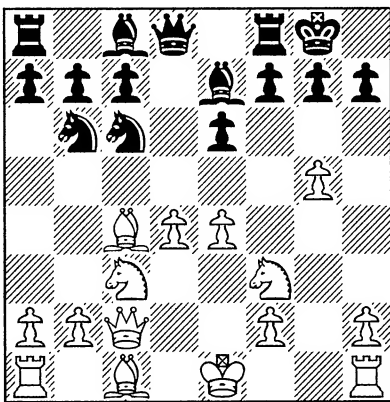


Diagram 12 (W)

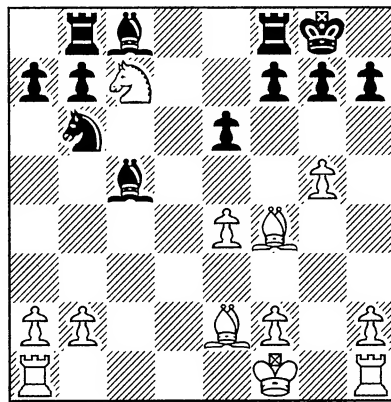


Diagram 13 (B)

10...Bb4+ 11 Kf1!

This may appear a little artificial, but one should not follow up creative ideas like 5 g4 with stereotyped play! Instead 11 Bd2?! Bxd2+ 12 Kxd2 Nxd4 (an immediate 12...e5!? might be even more awkward, especially in the case of 13 d5 Bg4 14 Ke3 Nb4! 15 Qc3 Qd6) 13 Nexd4 e5 14 Bd3 exd4 15 Rag1 Qe7 16 h4 c5 saw White bravely, if essentially, going all-in in L.Bergez-A.Shchekachev, Creon 2000. Bergez's creative attack earned him a draw, but objectively Black appears to be doing well here.

11...e5 12 d5 Bh3+ 13 Kg1 (Diagram 14)

This is another Olthof idea, reaching quite an obscure position. White's king's rook isn't too happy, but anything could happen here, such as after 13...Nxc4 14 Qxc4 Qd7 15 Ng3 Qg4 16 Qe2 Nd4 17 Nxd4 exd4 18 Qxg4 Bxg4 19 Kg2, which can only be described as most unclear. Tests of this, as well as of both 10 Be2 and 7 g5, are most urgently required!

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Be7 5 g4 c6

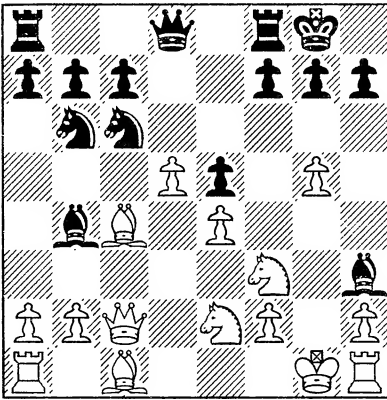
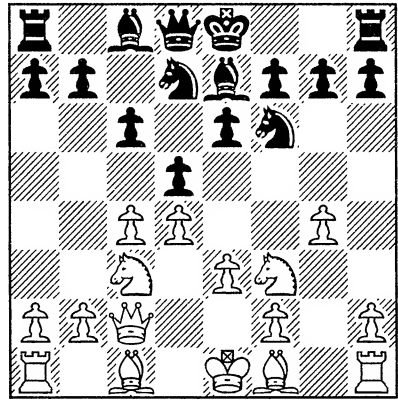
Black hopes to play along Semi-Slav lines, except that there he usually develops his dark-squared bishop more actively to d6.

6 Qc2!?

The most ambitious try, preparing 7 g5 Nd7 8 e4.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: White should also give serious thought to 6 e3 Nbd7 7 Qc2 (Diagram 15), reaching a position which usually occurs via 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Qc2 Be7 7 g4.

**Diagram 14 (B)****Diagram 15 (B)**

Black can hope that his dark-squared bishop is less exposed on e7, compared with its much more common position on d6, but White's position still appears the more fun to play, as well as fairly dangerous. M.Krasenkow-M.Hoffmann, German League 2006, continued 7...dxc4 (7...Nf8?! 8 g5 N6d7 9 h4 a6 10 e4 dxc4 11 Bxc4 b5 12 Be2 Bb7 13 Be3 Rc8 14 0-0-0 was far too easy for White in A.Shirov-B.Ivanovic, Moscow (blitz) 1993) 8 Bxc4 b5 9 Bd3 (9 Be2!? is another reasonable approach, covering the king's knight à la Eklund) 9...Bb7 10 g5 Nd5 11 Nxd5 cxd5 12 h4 Rc8 13 Qe2 b4 14 Bd2 0-0 15 h5, with perhaps a small advantage for White.

6...dxc4 7 e4 b5 8 g5 Nfd7

We've been following C.Piquemal-E.Bramme, French League 2003, in which White enjoyed decent play for his pawn. One idea in this very unclear position is 9 a4!? Qb6 10 Be3 (Diagram 16), after which the king may sit on f1 and White will look to advance his h-pawn, as well as to always meet ...c5 with d5.

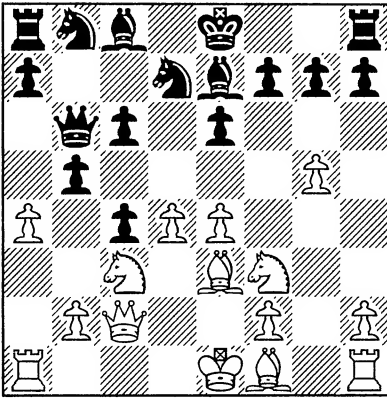


Diagram 16 (B)

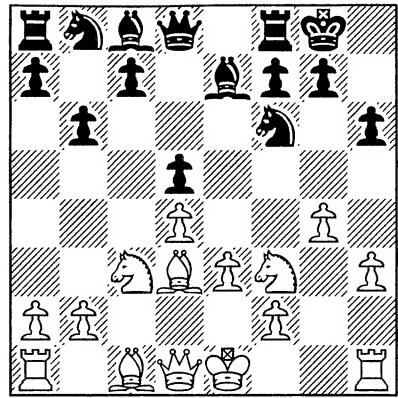


Diagram 17 (B)

C) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Be7 5 g4 h6

This feels a little defensive, but may well not be at all bad. White might now like to investigate both 6 Bf4 and 6 Ne5!? Nbd7 7 Bg2, as well as the 6 e3 b6 of M.Silva-J.Mesquita, Brazil 1995 (the earliest game I have found with the very modern 5 g4), and now probably best is 7 cxd5! exd5 (or 7...Nxd5 8 Be2 Bb7 9 Qc2 0-0 10 Rg1, hoping to gain a strong attack after h4 and g5) 8 h3 0-0 9 Bd3 (**Diagram 17**), playing quite classically and intending to follow up with Ne5 and Qf3.

D) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Be7 5 g4 dxc4

Black attempts to gain immediate central counterplay, but this allows White a pleasant choice between 6 e4!? Nxe4 7 Bxc4, with a strong centre and easy development for the pawn, and 6 g5 Nd5 7 e4, intending to regain the pawn with 7...Nb6 (Black might hang on to his extra pawn, but 7...Nxc3 8 bxc3 b5 9 a4 c6 10 h4! offers White quite promising compensation) 8 Bxc4 Nxc4 9 Qa4+ Nd7 10 Qxc4, when White's extra space should slightly outweigh Black's bishop-pair.

E) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Be7 5 g4 c5!? (Diagram 18)

Compared with Line D, this is a better method of opening the centre and will no doubt be tested soon. This position is absolutely unclear and quite fun to analyse. A couple of ideas: 6 cxd5 (or 6 g5!? Ne4 7 e3, intending to develop with Bd3 and maybe Rg1 if needed, and to meet 7...Nxe5 8 Nxe5 Bxe5 with 9 cxd5 exd5 10 dxc5, which favours White) 6...exd5 (6...Nxd5!? 7 dxc5 Bxc5 8 e4 Nxc3 9 Qxd8+ Kxd8 10 bxc3 is yet another rich and completely unexplored position; once again White's extra space should not be underestimated) 7 g5 Ne4 8 dxc5 Nxc3 9 bxc3 Bxc5 10

Bg2 reaches a rather unusual version of the Tarrasch. Here White might do well to decline castling, in favour of a more aggressive set-up with Kf1, Bf4 and h4-h5, but whether that will be enough to break down Black after ...0-0 and ...Bf5-e4 isn't at all clear.

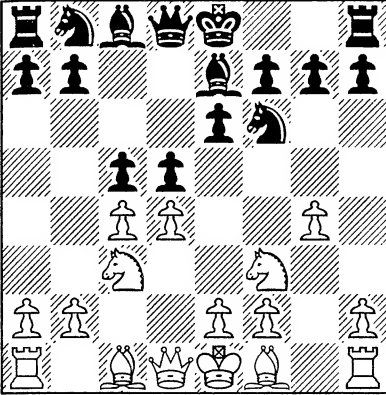


Diagram 18 (W)

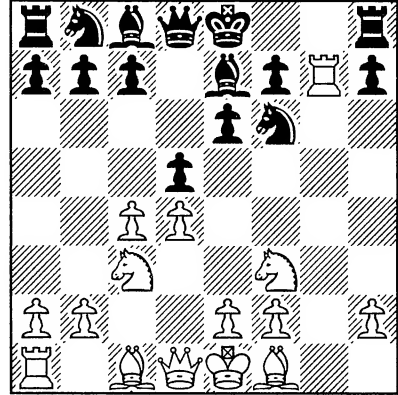


Diagram 19 (B)

F) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Be7 5 g4 Nxg4?!

Acceptance is often critical, but here 6 Rg1 Nf6 7 Rxg7 (**Diagram 19**) doesn't convince for Black: White is both the more active and the side who will find it easier to castle long.

Conclusion

I'm amazed that 5 g4!? hasn't yet been played much more. Not only does it really shock solid QGD-types, but the move appears to be sound and can quickly lead to some very rich and enjoyable positions. Will 5 g4 become the new Krasenkov-Zvjaginsev Gambit?

Chapter Twelve

The Anti-Vienna Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 e4 Bb4 6 Bxc4!?

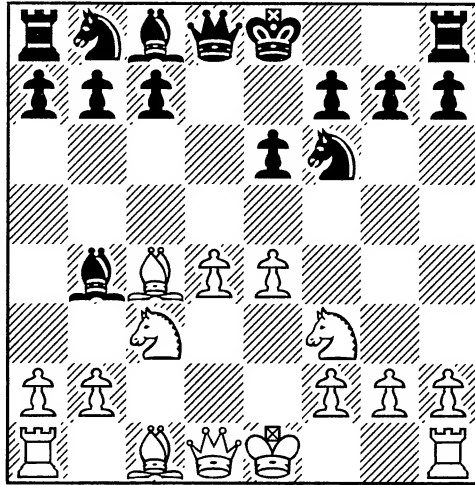


Diagram 1 (B)

It might be Black who is playing the Vienna Variation (as opposed to the Vienna Gambit: 1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 and 3 f4), but White can take inspiration from the Open Games when up against this sharp opening. Our chosen weapon does just that:

sacrificing White's e-pawn for a lead in development in a manner of which the Victorian romantics would surely have approved.

To date fewer than 20 games have been played with this anti-Vienna Gambit, but it has already attracted some grandmaster attention: no lesser player than Kasimdzhanov ventured it in his Candidates match with Gelfand. Let's kick off by seeing how Anand's no.2 and the highly-respected theoretician, Peter Heine Nielsen, coped when hit by 6 Bxc4.

□ S.Pedersen ■ P.H.Nielsen

Faaborg (blindfold), 2007

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4

Another possible route into the Vienna is 4...Bb4 5 Bg5 dxc4, against which our next illustrative game features a different gambit approach for White: 6 a3!?

5 e4 Bb4 6 Bxc4!?

White usually prefers 6 Bg5 c5 and then either 7 Bxc4 or 7 e5, which both lead to some fascinating but also extremely theoretical positions. Pedersen's choice cuts out all that theory and, on the existing evidence, appears no less critical.

6...Nxe4

Black really has to accept the pawn. Otherwise he has conceded the centre for no real reason at all.

7 0-0 (Diagram 2)

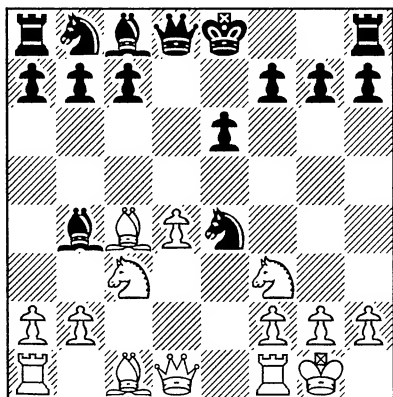


Diagram 2 (B)

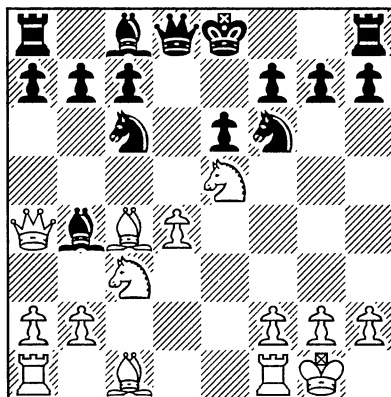


Diagram 3 (B)

Having said 'A', White must say 'B' and jettison a second pawn, not that Black can

really get away with grabbing it...

7...Bxc3?

Critical, but too greedy. Black's main choice thus far has been the more prudent 7...Nxc3 8 bxc3 Be7, which we will examine in some detail below.

There's also 7...Nf6, which was actually Aronian's choice in a blitz game, although after the straightforward 8 Qa4+ Nc6 9 Ne5! (**Diagram 3**) 9...Be7 (less convincing is 9...Bd7?! 10 Nxc6 Bxc3 11 Nxd8 Bxa4 12 Nxe6 fxe6 13 bxc3, with a pleasant advantage due to the bishop-pair and the weakness of e6, but perhaps Black might prefer 9...Bd6!?) 10 Nxc6 (I also quite like the direct 10 d5!? exd5 11 Nxd5, after which both 11...0-0 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Qxc6 Rb8 14 Nxe7+ Qxe7 15 Be3 and 11...Nxd5 12 Nxc6 Nb6 13 Nxd8+ Nxa4 14 Nxf7 Rf8 15 Ne5 see White emerging with the upper hand) 10...bxc6 11 Qxc6+ Bd7 12 Qf3 Rb8 13 Bb3 0-0 14 Bf4, White had quite a reasonable IQP set-up and a pull in J.Gustafsson-L.Aronian, online blitz 2004.

8 bxc3 Nxc3 9 Qb3! (Diagram 4)

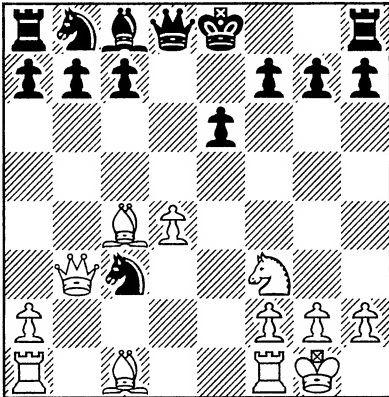


Diagram 4 (B)

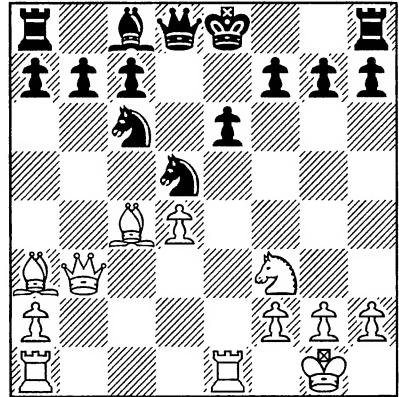


Diagram 5 (B)

Continuing in the spirit of the Møller Gambit and I prefer this to an old suggestion of Kishnev's, namely 9 Qd3 Nd5 10 Ba3. That isn't so bad, but after 10...Nc6 (or even 10...a5!?) 11 Rfe1 Nce7, it's not at all clear how to break through Black's solid defences since 12 Bxe7? Nxe7 13 d5 exd5 14 Bxd5 now runs into the pinning 14...Be6.

9...Nd5

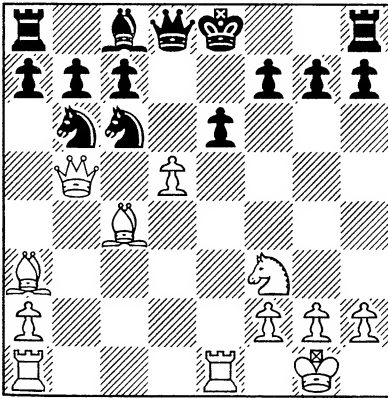
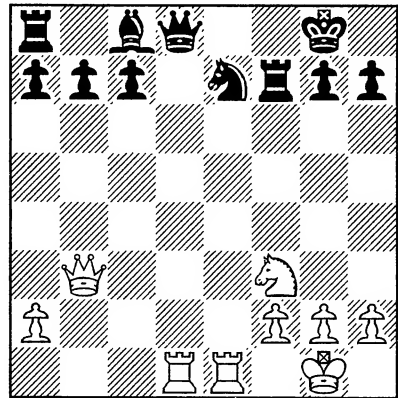
Essential. Black had to avoid 9...Ne4? 10 Re1 Nf6 (or 10...Nd6 11 Bg5 f6 12 Bxe6, causing all sorts of problems), after which the classic breakthrough 11 d5 soon sees White's active pieces running riot following 11...0-0 12 dxe6 Bxe6 13 Bxe6 fxe6 14 Rxe6 Kh8 15 Ba3.

10 Ba3

Scherbakov points out that White might even have a second promising continuation in 10 Re1. However, I'm not sure that White's initiative is so strong after 10...0-0 11 Ba3 Re8 12 Bxd5 exd5 13 Rxe8+ Qxe8 14 Re1 Be6 15 Qxb7, because Black remains quite solid and only a little worse after 15...Nc6 16 Rc1 (or 16 Qxc7 Qd7 17 Qf4 f6!, keeping White's knight at bay) 16...Bd7 17 Qxc7 Rc8 18 Qf4 Qe6.

10...Nc6 11 Rfe1 (Diagram 5) 11...Nce7

Desperately trying to plug the a3-f8 diagonal in order to castle. So grim is Nielsen's position that he probably also considered 11...Na5? 12 Qa4+ Nc6, hoping for an early repetition. However, White can successfully navigate the threat of 13...Nb6 with 13 Qb5! Nb6 (and not 13...Nde7? 14 d5! a6 15 Qb2 exd5 16 Qxg7 Rf8 17 Ng5 with a colossal attack) 14 d5! (**Diagram 6**), as pointed out by Scherbakov. His analysis continues 14...a6 (neither is 14...Nxc4 15 Qxc4 Ne7 much of an improvement for Black after 16 Rad1 0-0 17 dxe6 Bxe6, when White has a pleasant choice between the exchange-winning 18 Qe4!? Qe8 19 Ng5 and playing an ending a piece for two pawns up after 18 Rxd8 Bxc4 19 Rxf8+ Rxf8 20 Bxe7 Re8 21 Rc1 Rxe7 22 Rxc4) 15 Qc5 Qd6 (or 15...Qe7?! 16 dxe6! Qxc5 17 exf7+ Kd8 18 Bxc5, followed by picking up the exchange with 18...Nxc4 19 f8Q+ Rxf8 20 Bxf8) 16 Qxb6! Qxa3 17 Qxc7 Qe7 18 Qg3 Na5 19 Bd3 g6 20 Rac1, with a sizeable initiative and quite possibly a decisive one in my view.

**Diagram 6 (B)****Diagram 7 (B)****12 Bxe7!**

Realizing that he must use his lead in development to strike before Black gets organized, Pedersen blasts open the central files for his rooks.

12...Nxe7 13 d5 exd5 14 Bxd5 0-0 15 Bxf7+! Rxf7 16 Rad1 (Diagram 7)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! In some ways it was fortunate for Nielsen that he couldn't see the board, so bad is the carnage! White's major pieces rule the board and the pin on the f7-rook ensures that Pedersen will emerge material ahead.

16...Qf8 17 Ng5! Bg4

The only move. Black had to clear his back rank and the text at least hits a white rook, whereas 17...Bf5? 18 Nxf7 Qxf7 19 Rxe7 Qxb3 20 axb3 would have left White the exchange ahead with an easy win.

18 f3

The Danish IM and respected author continues to find the most accurate moves. Here he correctly rejected 18 Nxf7? due to 18...Bxd1! when Black scrambles a draw as White has nothing better than perpetual with 19 Nh6+ Kh8 20 Nf7+.

18...Bh5 (Diagram 8)

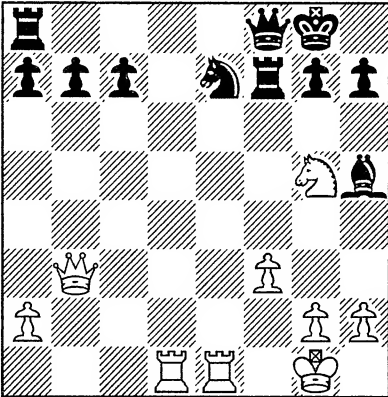


Diagram 8 (W)

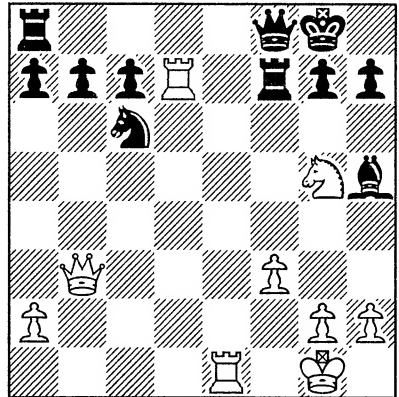


Diagram 9 (W)

19 Rd7?

Presumably Pedersen missed an important detail around this point. Had it not been a blindfold game, I'm sure that he would have found 19 Ne6! when 19...Rxf3!? (essential desperation: White's queen would have been far too powerful in the case of 19...Qc8? 20 Rd8+ Qxd8 21 Nxd8 Rxd8 22 Rxe7, and 19...Bxf3 20 Nxf8 Bxd1 21 Rxd1 Raxf8 22 Rd7 also leaves Black's extra rook and knight struggling to mount any sort of defence against White's rampaging queen) 20 gxf3 Qf6!? (trying to drum up some counterplay against White's weakened kingside, whereas 20...Bf7 gives White a number of strong continuations, including 21 Nxf8 Bxb3 22 axb3 Kxf8 23 Rd7 Nc6 24 Rxc7, with an extra exchange) 21 Rd7 Kh8 22

Nxc7 Qg5+ might have caused some nervous moments, but is ultimately insufficient as shown by the fearless machine: 23 Kh1 Qh4 24 Rdx7! Qf2 25 R7e3 Bxf3+ 26 Rxf3 Qxe1+ 27 Kg2 Rd8 28 Ne6 Rd2+ 29 Kh3, after which it's White's turn to attack and his extra piece should eventually carry the day.

19...Nc6 (Diagram 9) 20 Rxc7??

Losing the plot completely, in a manner which can so easily happen without sight of the board. Instead White could have fought on, albeit in a clearly inferior situation, with 20 Nxf7 Bxf7 21 Qxb7 Qc5+ 22 Kh1 Re8 23 Rdd1.

20...Qc5+ 21 Kh1 Qxg5 22 Qxb7 Rxc7 23 Qxa8+ Qd8 0-1

A tragedy for Pedersen after an excellent opening and some inspired early mid-game play.

Let's now turn our attention to a different gambit for White against the Vienna and one which is important because it can also arise from the move order 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Bb4 (rather than 4...dxc4, although White might now keep play within Ragozin lines with 5 cxd5 exd5 6 Bg5) 5 Bg5 dxc4 (taking play back into the Vienna, whereas 5...Nbd7 would be a Ragozin), thereby avoiding the gambit which we've just examined.

□ L.Van Wely ■ Z. Ribli

German League 2000

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 Bg5 Bb4

Keeping play within Vienna territory, rather than transpose to the Botvinnik Semi-Slav with 5...c6 or head for independent waters with 5...a6.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: There are indeed, I'm afraid, several ways of reaching the position after 5...Bb4+. Another move order, and the one which was actually played in Van Wely-Ribli, is 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Bb4+ 5 Nc3 dxc4.

6 a3!? (Diagram 10)

Rather than advance in the centre, White first offers a pawn to resolve the queen-side situation and to exchange Black's active bishop.

6...Bxc3+

Just like after 5 e4 Bb4 6 Bxc4, Black must take up the challenge. Here the meek 6...Be7?! 7 e4 b5 8 Bxf6 Bxf6 9 Nxb5 merely leaves Black struggling, with c4 weak and White in control of the centre. Slightly better than that is 6...Ba5, although 7 Qa4+ Nc6 8 Qxc4 regains the pawn, while leaving Black's bishop a little offside.

7 bxc3 b5

The most obvious way to hold on to the extra pawn. Black's alternatives to this

risky, if critical, choice will be examined below.

8 e4

The most direct move, but not the only approach. Curiously Van Wely has twice had to face the more positional 8 a4!? when on the black side of the Vienna. A.Grischuk-L.Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2005, continued 8...c6 9 g3 (stronger than 9 Qb1 a6 10 Ne5?! h6! 11 Bd2 Qc7 12 g3 Bb7 13 Bg2 Nbd7 14 Nxd7 Qxd7 15 0-0 0-0, which left White struggling for compensation in the later D.Fridman-L.Van Wely, Ajaccio (blitz) 2007) 9...h6 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 Bg2 Bb7 12 Qb1 a6 13 Nd2 Qc7 14 0-0 Nd7 (**Diagram 11**), with an unbalanced Catalan-type scenario and now I wonder about 15 axb5!? (15 Qb4 c5! 16 dxc5 Bxg2 17 Kxg2 Qc6+ equalized in the game) 15...axb5 (or 15...cxb5?! 16 Bxb7 Qxb7 17 Nxc4 Qc6 18 Ne3 Qxc3 19 Qe4, with promising compensation) 16 Rxa8+ Bxa8 17 Qb4, retaining decent compensation for the pawn: as well as Ra1, Ne4-d6 is high on the agenda (or e2-e4 should Black prevent Ne4 with ...f5).

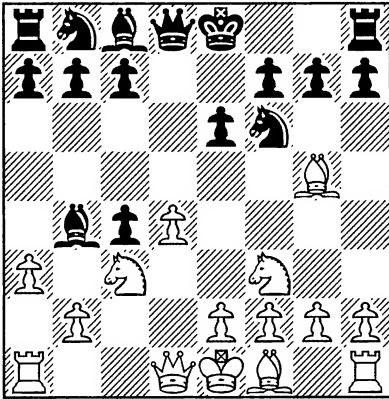


Diagram 10 (B)

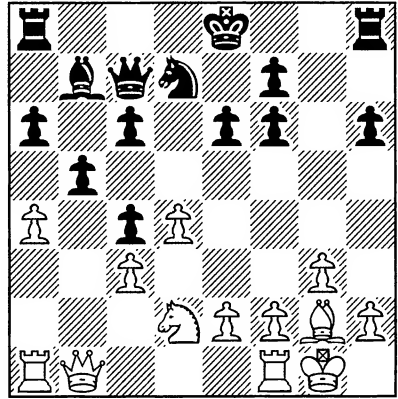


Diagram 11 (W)

8...Nbd7

Provocative and perhaps Black does better to break the pin with 8...h6!?. I.Sokolov-T.Vasilevich, Reykjavik 2006, continued 9 Bxf6! (continuing to develop as quickly as possible; 9 Bh4 isn't that bad, but after 9...g5! 10 Nxc5 hxc5 11 Bxc5 Rg8 12 h4 Nbd7 13 e5 Rxc5 14 hxc5 Nd5 15 g6 Qg5!, as given by Van Wely, Black has reasonable counterplay in this very unclear and highly Semi-Slav-like scenario) 9...Qxf6 (or 9...gxf6 10 a4 c6 and now both Rizzitano's 11 Be2!? and the 11 g3 Bb7 12 Bg2 Nd7 13 0-0 a6 14 Nh4! of J.Gomez Esteba-M.Perez Candelario, Spanish Championship, Leon 2006, retain decent compensation: White has pressure on both flanks and Black's king lacks a safe home) 10 a4 c6 and now Sokolov recommends 11 e5! Qe7 12 Nd2 (**Diagram 12**), bringing White's knight to the excellent

e4-square, with promising compensation.

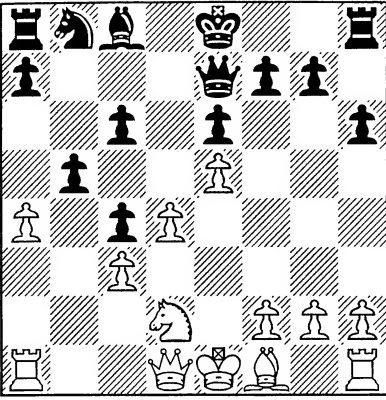


Diagram 12 (B)

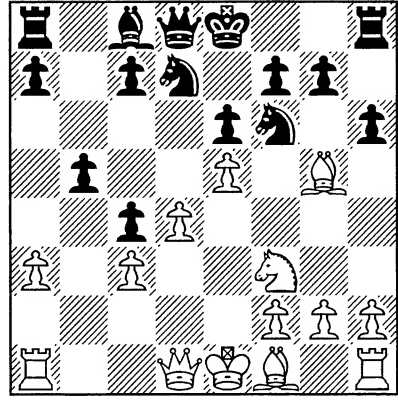


Diagram 13 (W)

9 e5 h6 (Diagram 13) 10 exf6!

Opening lines and this is stronger than 10 Bh4 g5 11 Nxg5 hxg5 12 Bxg5 Rg8 13 h4 (or 13 Bh4 Rh8 14 Bg5 Rg8 with an unusual repetition) 13...Rxc7 14 hxg5 Nd5, transposing to a rather messy position given in the notes to Black's 8th move.

10...hxg5 11 fxg7 Rg8 12 Qb1 (Diagram 14)

The point behind White's 10th: not only is b5 en prise, but a timely Qe4 or Qh7 may be problematic.

12...g4?

Now White gains the initiative and so Black should prefer:

a) 12...Bb7!? 13 Qxb5 Bxf3 14 gxf3 Rxc7 15 Qxc4 c5 16 Rd1 (Van Wely) isn't entirely clear, but should be a bit better for White: an h4-break being one idea.

b) 12...c6 is quite Semi-Slav-like and can easily lead to fireworks. Following 13 a4 a6 (or 13...Qa5 14 Qb2 Rxc7 15 axb5 Qxb5 16 Qa3 with promising play since Black's position is riddled with weaknesses: 17 Nd2 being the immediate threat) 14 Ne5! (Diagram 15) 14...Qa5 (Van Wely's notes suggest 14...Nxe5!? 15 Qh7 Ke7 16 dxe5 Qa5 17 Rc1, which he feels is unclear, but I'm not so sure that Black has enough play after 17...Bb7 18 Qh6 Ke8 19 Qxc5: White's kingside majority is no mean factor and neither is the idea of Be2, 0-0 and Bh5) 15 Ra3 Nxe5!? (15...Qc7 16 Qh7 Nf6 17 Qh6 Qe7 18 Ra1, as given by Van Wely, sees White maintaining control with a promising position) 16 Qh7 Rxc7 17 Qxc7 Ng6 18 Be2 b4 19 Ra1 b3 20 0-0 the position is most unclear: White is the exchange up, but his queenside is in tatters, although so too is Black's kingside. Play might continue 20...b2!? (probably better than 20...Qxc3 21 Rac1 Qd2 22 Bf3 Bd7 23 Rxc4, eliminating one of the trou-

blesome pawns) 21 Rab1 Qxc3 22 Bh5 Rb8 23 Bxg6 fxxg6 24 Qxg6+ Kd7 25 Qg7+!
 (25 Rfe1?! Kc7! gets the king to safety and forces White to take the perpetual after
 26 Qxg5 Qxe1+! 27 Rxe1 b1Q 28 Qe5+ Kd8 29 Qh8+) 25...Ke8 26 Qxg5, still with
 something of a mess, although White is probably doing well as Black's pawns
 have been halted for the time being.

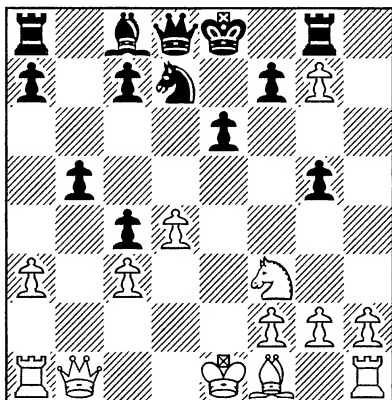


Diagram 14 (B)

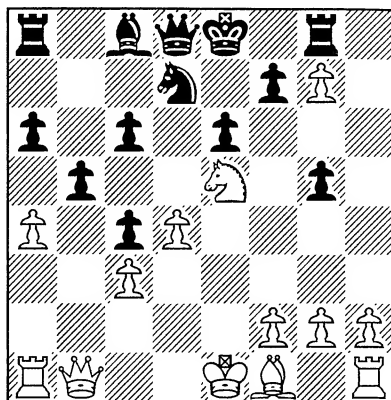


Diagram 15 (B)

13 Ne5! Qg5

Ribli's problem is that he would like to meet Qh7 with ...Nf6 and so needs to keep his knight on d7. Nevertheless, perhaps he might have tried 13...Nxe5!?, although 14 Qh7 Kd7 15 dxe5 Bb7 16 Qh6 still leaves White somewhat better.

14 Qxb5 Rb8 15 Qc6!

Maintaining the pin and rightly not worrying about 15...Rb2 (16 Nxc4 is a more than adequate response).

15...Qf5!?

Ribli desperately tries to drum up some counterplay. Instead 15...Rxxg7 16 Bxc4 Kd8 17 0-0 Qh5 18 Qe4 might have been a more resilient defence, but this would hardly have been appetizing for him.

16 Bxc4! (Diagram 16)



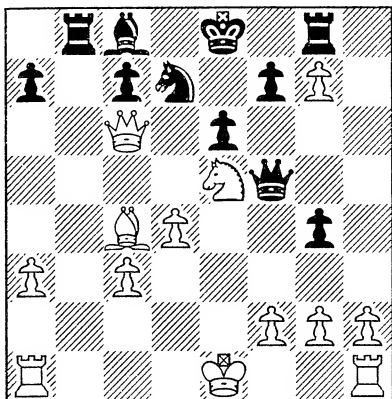
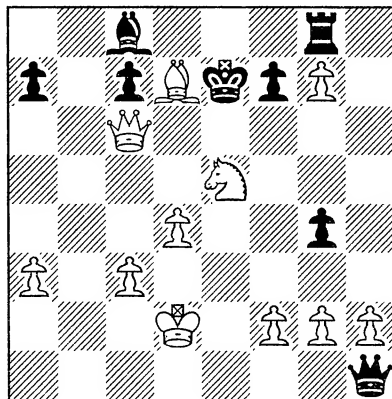
DANGEROUS WEAPON! By following up his dangerous gambit and active play with this fine rook sacrifice, Van Wely is able to quickly conclude proceedings.

16...Rb1+ 17 Rxb1 Qxb1+ 18 Kd2 Qxh1

Black might as well force White to be accurate. Instead 18...Qb2+ 19 Kd3 Qb6 20 Qa4 Rxxg7 21 Kc2, followed by 22 Rb1, would have left White toying with him.

19 Bxe6!?

The most aesthetic. Van Wely later pointed out that the straightforward 19 Nxd7 would also have more than done the job since 19...Ke7 is well met by 20 Qc5+!

19...Ke7 20 Bxd7 (Diagram 17)**Diagram 16 (B)****Diagram 17 (B)****20...Qf1**

Now White forces his g-pawn home. The last chance was 20...Qb1, although after 21 Bxc8 Qb2+ 22 Kd3 Qb1+ 23 Kc4 Qa2+ 24 Kb4 Qb2+ (or 24...Rxc8 25 Qd7+ Kf6 26 Qxc8 Qb2+ 27 Kc4 Qa2+ 28 Kc5 Qxa3+ 29 Kd5 Qd6+ 30 Ke4 Kxg7 31 Qxg4+ with an easy win) 25 Ka4 Qc2+ 26 Ka5 the checks dry up, leaving White's attack decisive.

21 Ng6+! fxcg 22 Qe6+ Kd8 23 Qxg8+ Kxd7 24 Qf7+ Kc6 25 g8Q 1-0**Looking a Little Deeper****1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 (Diagram 18)**

We will now examine both:

A: 5 e4 Bb4 6 Bxc4

B: 5 Bg5 Bb4 6 a3

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 e4 Bb4 6 Bxc4 Nxe4 7 0-0

Having examined the greedy 7...Bxc3? and the slightly too submissive 7...Nf6 in Pedersen-Nielsen, it's time to turn our attention to Black's main defence.

7...Nxc3 8 bxc3 (Diagram 19)

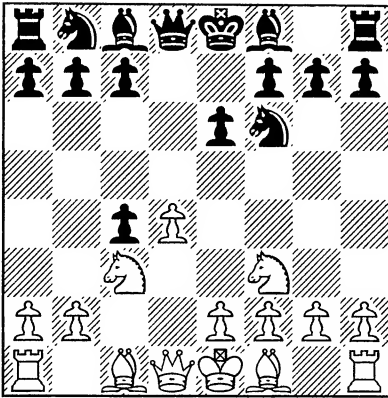


Diagram 18 (W)

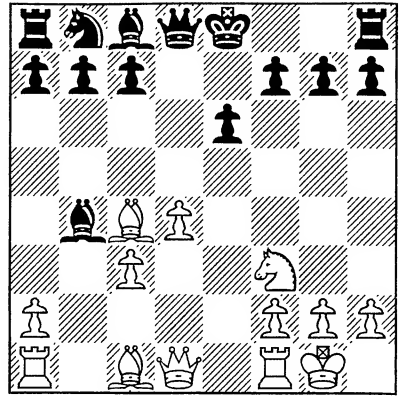


Diagram 19 (B)

8...Be7!

Prudent, whereas 8...Bxc3 is again rather greedy: 9 Rb1 (Olsson's sacrificial 9 Ba3!? Bxa1 10 Qxa1 also comes into consideration) 9...c5 (or 9...0-0 when White has a host of promising options, including Kishnev's 10 Rb3 Ba5 11 Ng5 and Scherbakov's 10 Qd3!?, after which 10...Ba5 11 Ng5 g6 12 Ne4 already looks most suspicious for the second player) 10 Bg5! f6 11 Qb3!? (Scherbakov's idea; White might also consider the simpler 11 Be3, intending 11...cxd4 12 Bxd4 Bxd4 13 Nxd4 Nc6 14 Nxe6 Qxd1 15 Rfxd1, followed by regaining the second sacrificed pawn with advantage) 11...fxg5 (perhaps Black has to try 11...cxd4 12 Bxe6 Nc6!? when 13 Bd2 Bxe6 14 Qxe6+ Qe7 15 Qxe7+ Nxe7 16 Bxc3 dxc3 17 Rxb7 Kf7 18 Re1 Rhe8 19 Rc7 recovers the pawns, but unfortunately only by leading to a dead draw; if White can't improve on this, he may need to refrain from the tempting piece sacrifice) 12 Bxe6 (**Diagram 20**) gives White excellent attacking chances, as indicated by Scherbakov. Continuing this line we have 12...cxd4 (12...Bb4 is similarly met by a powerful 13 Rfe1!) 13 Rfe1!! Bxe1 14 Rxe1 Bxe6 (or 14...Kf8 15 Bxc8 Nc6 16 Bxb7 Rb8 17 Qa3+ Kf7 18 Bxc6 and wins) 15 Qxe6+ Kf8 16 Ne5 with an overwhelming attack for the rook: for example, 16...Qf6 17 Ng6+! Qxg6 18 Qe7+ Kg8 19 Qd8+ Kf7 20 Re7+ Kf6 21 Qd6+ Kf5 22 g4+ Kxg4 23 Qg3+ Kf5 24 Qf3 mate.

9 Ne5

This active leap has been popular, but it is important to be aware that White can also build up more slowly with Black so passive. Indeed, 9 Qe2!? Nd7 10 Rd1! (both preventing any ideas of ...c5 and especially preparing to open the position with d4-d5) 10...c6 11 Bb3 Qc7 12 h4 0-0 13 Bg5 Bd6 14 Qe4 (**Diagram 21**) retained good attacking compensation in T.Hillarp Persson-E.Agrest, Swedish Championship, Umea 2003.

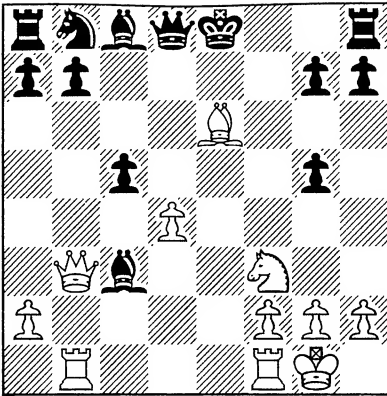


Diagram 20 (B)

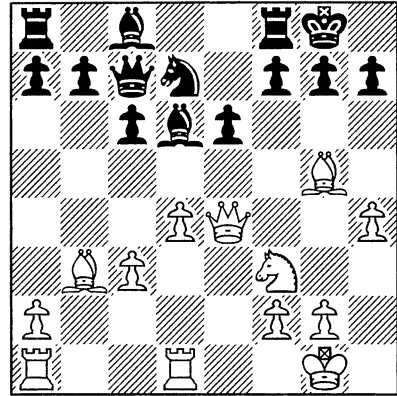


Diagram 21 (B)

9...0-0

Black might also challenge White's knight with 9...Nd7, not that he really wants to exchange knights after 10 Qg4: an open d-file would only cause further problems for him. J.Gustafsson-K.Landa, online blitz 2004, continued 10...0-0 11 Bh6 Bf6 12 Rfe1 Kh8 13 Bf4 g6 14 Rad1 c6 15 Bb3 (the more direct 15 h4!? also looks pretty tempting) 15...Bg7 16 Nc4 Nf6 17 Qf3 b5 18 Nd6 Bd7 19 Be5, retaining full compensation for the pawn.

10 Qg4 (Diagram 22)

The stem game, V.Arbakov-S.Kishnev, Moscow 1989, saw White opt for a slower build-up with 10 Qe2. I prefer the more active text, although Kishnev's idea of 10 f4!? Nd7 11 Qf3 Nb6 12 Bb3 also deserves a test or two.

10...Kh8!?

Gelfand is always meticulously prepared and so we should take this prophylactic move seriously. Previously 10...Nc6 11 Bh6 Bf6 12 f4! (Black might be very solid, but he will do well to shake off White's clamp; furthermore, he must now watch out for a rook lift to g3 or h3) 12...Ne7 13 Rae1 c5 14 Bg5!? Nf5 (Black's position isn't so easy to breach after 14...Bxg5? 15 fxg5, but White should be able to make something work down the h-file, such as with the patient 15...cxd4 16 cxd4!? Nf5 17 Rf4 Qc7 18 Bd3 Qc3 19 Ref1 Rd8 20 Qh3! Qb4 21 a3 Qe7 22 Rh4!, which leaves him with a crushing attack after all the careful manoeuvring) 15 dxc5 Bxg5 16 fxg5 (Diagram 23) 16...Qc7 17 c6! (I also quite like 17 Qh5!? Qxc5+ 18 Kh1 Qe7 19 Rf3, although perhaps Black can cling on with 19...g6 20 Qg4 Bd7 21 Rh3 Bc6 22 Bd3 Qc5!, with the fiendish idea of 23 Bxf5 Qf2) 17...bxc6 had looked pretty dangerous for Black in V.Potkin-A.Kharlov, Russian Team Championship 2006. Here White has to deal with the idea of 18...Ba6 and he might have done so with 18 Qh3!,

which is another deep idea from Scherbakov's excellent analysis on the ChessPublishing website. The main idea is the beautiful 18...Ba6? 19 Rxf5!! Bxc4 (or 19...exf5 20 g6 hxg6 21 Nxc6, followed by mate on h8) 20 g6! hxg6 21 Rf4, with a winning attack down the half-open h-file.

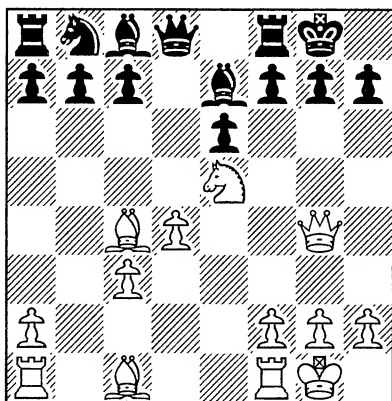


Diagram 22 (B)

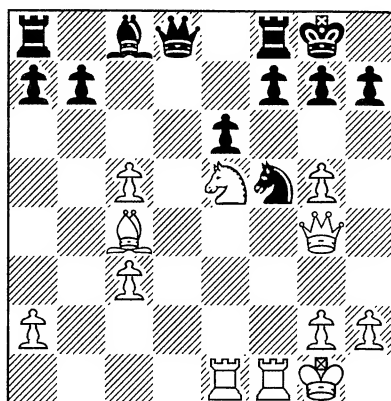


Diagram 23 (B)

11 Qh3 Qe8

Gelfand wants to close the b1-h7 diagonal with ...f5, which is a reasonable if slow defensive plan.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! If this unnatural plan is the best which Black can come up with, then White's gambit is clearly quite dangerous. Indeed, his more active pieces continue to supply good compensation even after ...f5.

12 Bd3 f5 (Diagram 24) 13 Re1

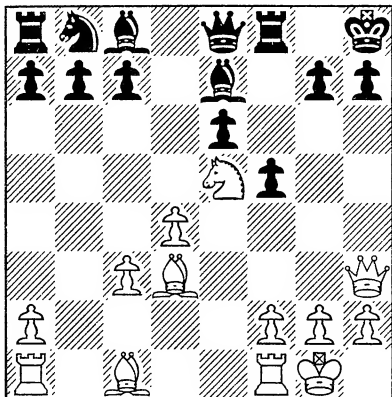
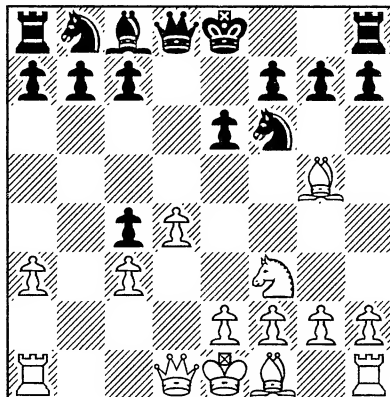
Scherbakov points out that 13 Be2!?, forcing 13...Kg8 14 Bh5 Qd8, is also critical, and now I wonder about 15 Bf4, intending 16 Rfe1, 17 Rad1 and 18 c4, retaining plenty of compensation.

13...Nc6

We've been following R.Kasimdzhanov-B.Gelfand, 4th matchgame, Elista 2007. Now 14 Nf3 was perhaps a bit slow and so White should probably investigate 14 Bb5!? Bd6 (or 14...Bd7 15 Nxd7 Qxd7 16 Bc4, tying Black down to his weakness on e6) 15 Bg5, maintaining decent positional compensation for the pawn, with Re3 and Rae1 one plan.

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4

A quick reminder that White can also use the following gambit against a 4...Bb4 move order, hoping with 5 Bg5 for a transposition after 5...dxc4.

5 Bg5 Bb4 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 (Diagram 25)**Diagram 24 (W)****Diagram 25 (B)**

Theory is still in its infancy here and a number of defences have been tried. As well as 7...b5, which we examined in Van Wely-Ribli, Black's main options are:

B1: 7...Nbd7**B2: 7...c6****B3: 7...Qd5****B4: 7...c5!?**

Also possible are:

a) 7...h6 8 Bxf6 Qxf6 9 e4 b5 transposes to the notes to White's 8th move in Van Wely-Ribli.

b) 7...a6?! is a recent try, but I'm at a loss to explain why White avoided the critical 8 e4 (8 Nd2 b5 9 a4 Bb7 10 Qb1 Nbd7!, with the idea of 11 Nxc4 Be4 was much less effective for White in L.Javakhishvili-K.Lahno, Kemer 2007) 8...b5?! 9 e5 h6 10 Bh4 g5 11 Nxg5 hxg5 12 Bxg5 Nbd7 13 Qf3 Rb8 14 exf6 Bb7 15 Qg3, which just looks quite promising.

c) Finally, we should note that 7...0-0?! is possible if not too impressive. Nonetheless, play can quickly become sharp, albeit in White's favour, such as after 8 e4 h6

9 Bh4!? g5 10 Nxc5! Nxe4 11 Nxe4 Qxh4 12 Qf3 when Black's weakened kingside is a serious cause for concern.

B1) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 Bg5 Bb4 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 Nbd7

Critical, albeit rarely played, quite possibly because many grandmasters distrust Black's lack of a safe home for his king after the essential follow-up ...g5.

8 e4 (Diagram 26)

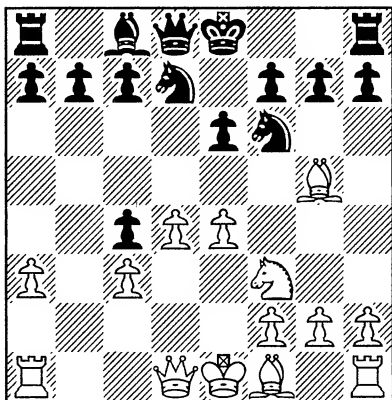


Diagram 26 (B)

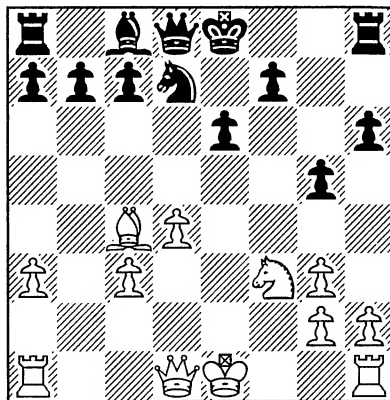


Diagram 27 (B)

8...h6

This resolves the central tension in a position in which White lacks a temporary piece sacrifice on g5. Black can also play more sharply and 8...b5 transposes to Van Wely-Ribli.

9 Bh4

The only move played thus far in practice. It is not at all easy for White to regain his pawn after 9 Bxf6!? Nxf6, but that doesn't mean that he should reject this possibility. Two ideas are 10 e5 Nd5 11 Bxc4 Nxc3 12 Qd3 Nd5 13 0-0 0-0 14 Qe4, preparing to force Black to weaken his kingside after 15 Bd3, and 10 Qb1 c6 11 Bxc4 Qa5 (thus far Ribli) 12 0-0 Qxc3 13 Rc1 Qa5 14 Qd3, with some play for the pawn in both cases.

9...g5 10 Bg3 b5

Black decides to maintain his pawn on c4. An important alternative is 10...Nxe4!? 11 Bxc4 Nxc3, not that there can be any doubting White's compensation after 12 fxg3! (**Diagram 27**). V.Borovikov-O.Gritsak, Ordzhonikidze 2000, continued 12...c5 13 0-0 0-0 14 Qd3 cxd4 (or 14...Nb6 15 Bb3 Nd5 16 Ne5, maintaining good pres-

sure) 15 cxd4 Qf6 16 h4! Qg7 17 hxg5 hxg5 18 Rae1 Nb6 19 Bb3 Nd5 20 Ne5 a5?
and now White made good use of the half-open f-file with 21 Bxd5 exd5 22 Nxf7!.

11 Qb1 a6 12 Be2 c5

The whole variation after 6 a3 is quite uncharted, and this sub-variation especially so. The text is pretty natural, but Black might also preface it with Ribli's suggestion of 12...Bb7!?, after which 13 Nd2 c5 14 d5!? exd5 15 e5 Ne4 16 Nxe4 dxe4 17 a4 remains pretty murky.

13 0-0 cxd4 14 Nxd4 Bb7 15 f3! (Diagram 28)

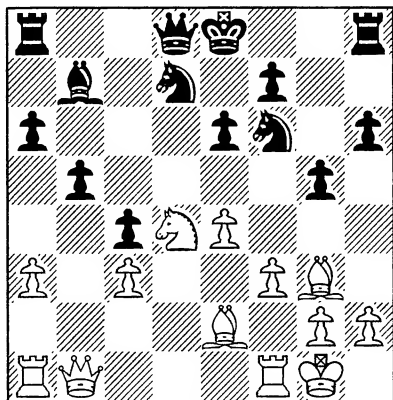


Diagram 28 (B)

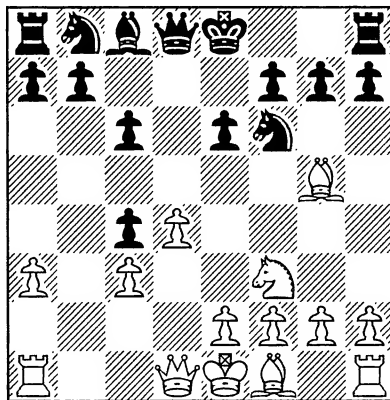


Diagram 29 (W)

Shoring up e4 and emphasizing White's good long-term compensation with his bishop-pair and safer king position. In P.Eljanov-J.Gustafsson, European Team Championship, Gothenburg 2005, the leading Vienna expert could find nothing better than to return the pawn with 15...Nh5!? 16 a4 Nxg3 17 hxg3 Qc7, but the active 18 axb5 a5 19 b6! saw White maintaining the upper hand.

B2) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 Bg5 Bb4 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 c6 (Diagram 29)

This has similarities with 7...b5, as Black might follow up with ...b5, although White should also expect an early ...Qa5, harassing both c3 and the bishop on g5.

8 Qc2



BEWARE: White must prepare his ideal central advance because 8 e4?! Qa5 9 Qc2?! Nxe4! leaves him struggling somewhat.

The text covers c3 while preparing e4, but White might again prefer to play in Catalan-style with g3 and now:

a) 8...Qa5 9 Qc2 Ne4?! (tempting, but Black should probably prefer to transpose to our next variation with 9...Nbd7) 10 Bd2 Nxd2 11 Nxd2 b5 12 Bg2 Bb7 13 0-0 Qc7 14 Rfb1! Nd7 15 Qb2 (**Diagram 30**) has created awkward problems for Black in practice. D.Bocharov-A.Kosteniuk, Moscow 2005, continued 15...Rb8 (perhaps the meek 15...0-0!? is better, restricting White to just an edge after 16 Nxc4 Rab8 17 Ne3 c5 18 d5 exd5 19 Nxd5 Bxd5 20 Bxd5 Nb6 21 Be4, as occurred in I.Zakharevich-Zhou Weiqi, Moscow 2006) 16 a4! c5 (Black's problem is that 16...a6 17 axb5 axb5 18 Nxc4! bxc4 19 Ra7 will regain the piece with advantage) 17 Bxb7 Rxb7 18 axb5 0-0 (or 18...cxd4? 19 Qb4 dxc3 20 Nxc4, with a serious initiative) 19 dxc5 Qxc5 20 Qb4, with a clear advantage due to White's queenside pressure.

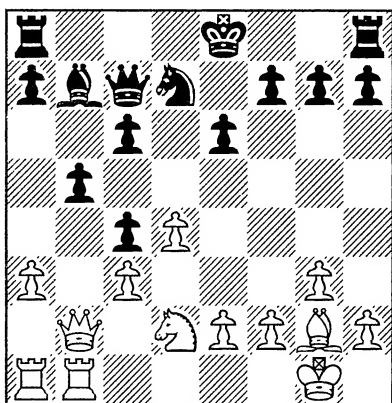


Diagram 30 (B)

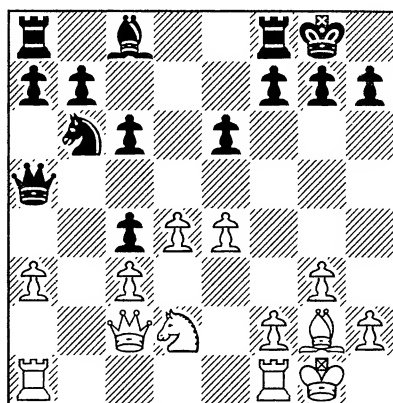


Diagram 31 (B)

b) 8...Nbd7!? 9 Bg2 Qa5 10 Qc2 Ne4 11 Bd2 Nxd2 12 Nxd2 Nb6 looks like a much better version of the same trick for Black. Here White can't strike back on the queenside and so had to settle for 13 0-0 0-0 14 e4 (**Diagram 31**), retaining sufficient central and spatial compensation in P.Eljanov-C.Bauer, Biel 2004. That continued 14...Rd8 15 Rfe1 (Magomedov wonders about 15 a4!?, although his own line of 15...c5 16 dxc5 Qxc5 17 a5 Nd7 18 Rfd1 e5 19 Bf1 Nf6! 20 Nxc4 Be6 fails to bring White any advantage; however, perhaps there might be some mileage in 15 e5 c5 16 Be4!?, especially since 16...cxd4 17 cxd4 Rxd4 18 Bxh7+ Kf8 19 Nf3 doesn't seem so bad for White: Qe4-h4 may follow) 15...c5! 16 d5 Bd7 and now White should probably prepare to shore up d5 and give his queen a square with 17 Nf1.

Finally, before returning to 8 Qc2, I should just mention Magomedov's suggestion of 8 Bxf6!? when one possible continuation is 8...Qxf6 9 Ne5 b5 10 g3 Bb7 11 Bg2 0-0 12 0-0, followed by a4 with some pressure for the pawn.

8...Qa5

Black might also play in the manner of Line B1 with 8...Nbd7, after which 9 e4!? (9 g3 Qa5 transposes to note 'b' to White's 8th move) 9...Qa5 10 Bd2 b5 11 a4 retains reasonable compensation.

9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 g3 b5 11 Bg2 Bb7 12 0-0 Nd7 13 a4 (Diagram 32)

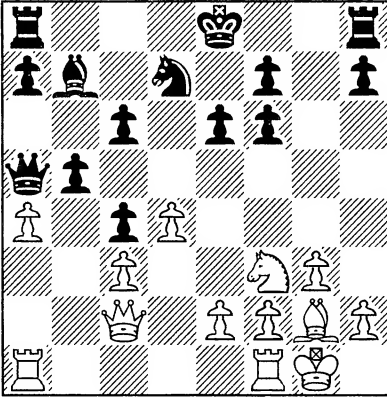


Diagram 32 (B)

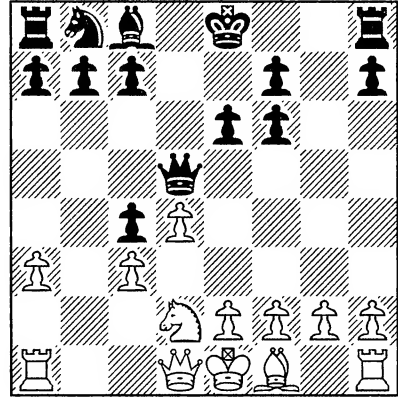


Diagram 33 (B)

This looks to me like an improved version of the 8 g3 lines for White and once again we find him with decent compensation on both flanks. M.Roiz-A.Schenk, World Junior Championship, Athens 2001, continued 13...Qc7 and now as well as the game's 14 e4, I quite like 14 Qc1!?, probing Black's vulnerable dark squares.

B3) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 Bg5 Bb4 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 Qd5

I'm not too convinced by this ambitious attempt, but we should give it some respect as it was Aronian's choice the first time he was surprised by 6 a3 (he later switched to 7...c5 – see Line B4) and has twice been played by Inkiöv.

8 Bxf6 gxf6 9 Nd2! (Diagram 33)

Both supporting 10 e4 and taking aim at c4.

9...b5?!

Critical, but not convincing. Black might do better by returning the pawn:

a) 9...Nd7 10 e4 Qa5 was seen in J.Rau-L.Aronian, Bad Wiessee 2002, and now Teske's suggestion of 11 Qc1! appears promising since White will win back the pawn with advantage (11...b5?! 12 a4 is most certainly not a panacea for Black).

b) 9...0-0?! 10 e4 Qa5 11 Qf3! (even stronger than 11 Qc1 because ...b5 isn't now a problem) 11...b5? 12 e5 fxe5!? 13 Qxa8 Qxc3 14 Rd1 was extremely speculative in

D.Komarov-J.Tersarkisoff, French League 1996, and quickly shown up as unconvincing by 14...exd4 (or 14...Nd7 15 Qc6 Qb2 16 Rb1 Qc2 17 Qe4 Qxe4+ 18 Nxe4 and again Black comes up short because b5 hangs) 15 Qxb8 Qa5 16 Bxc4! (the simplest) 16...bxc4 17 0-0 c3 18 Nb3 Qxa3 19 Nxd4, with a trivially winning advantage.

10 a4!?

I quite like this restrained approach, not that there is anything wrong with 10 e4 Qd8 11 Qh5 c6 12 Be2 Bb7 13 0-0 Nd7 14 a4, which supplied the usual promising compensation in V.Dydyshko-E.Rajskij, Minsk 1988.

10...c6 11 e3 Bb7 12 Be2! (Diagram 34)

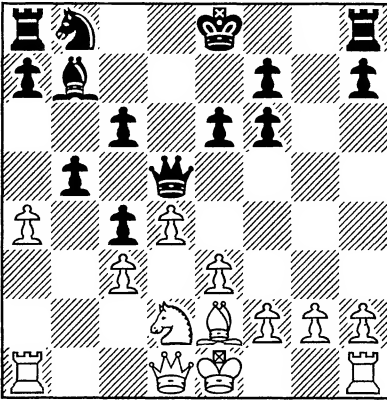


Diagram 34 (B)

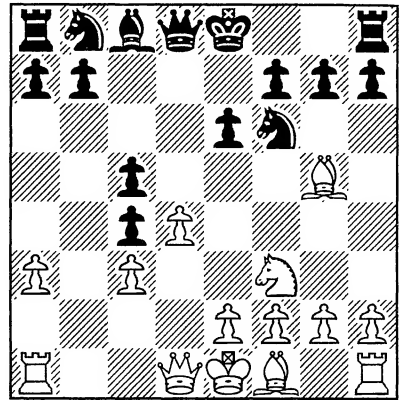


Diagram 35 (W)

12...Qd7



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Black's main problem is that 12...Qxg2? 13 Bf3 Qg6 14 axb5 leads to something of a disaster for him on the queenside, but retreating the queen is a sign that the early ...Qd5 was not a success.

13 Ne4 Qe7 14 Nc5

We've been following C.Niklasson-S.Hjorth, Sundsvall 1979, in which White's monster knight dominated proceedings from c5. Black could hardly live with it, but 14...Na6 15 Nxb7 Qxb7 16 axb5 Qxb5 17 Ra4 Nc7 18 Rxc4 saw his queenside beginning to disintegrate in the game.

B4) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 Bg5 Bb4 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 c5! (Diagram 35)

Rather than cling on to the extra pawn, Black prefers to return it for some development and counterplay.

8 e3

I quite like this developing approach, but some big names have preferred the more materialistic 8 Qa4+. S.Mamedyarov-L.Aronian, Spanish Team Championship 2006, continued 8...Bd7 (also not bad is 8...Nc6 9 Qxc4 cxd4 10 cxd4 h6 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 12 e3 0-0 13 Rd1 Bd7 14 Be2 Rfc8 15 0-0, which restricted White to just a small edge in L.Van Wely-V.Colin, Ajaccio (rapid) 2006) 9 Qxc4 cxd4 10 cxd4 0-0 11 e3 Nc6 (threatening an awkward check on a5) 12 Qc5 Rc8 13 Bd3 Re8 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Qd6 Rcd8 16 0-0 e5! and Black had equalized.

8...Qa5

Critical, but not the only option. That said, Black must act before White simply recaptures on c4 and 8...b5 9 a4! Qa5 10 Bxf6 Qxc3+ 11 Nd2 gxf6 12 axb5 appears to give White an improved version of our main line.

Perhaps the solid 8...cxd4!? should be preferred, although 9 Qxd4 Qxd4 10 exd4! (with the idea of 10...b5 11 a4) still offers White chances for an edge with his bishop-pair or superior development in the case of 10...Ne4 11 Bxc4 Nxc4 12 Nxc4.

9 Bxf6 Qxc3+ 10 Nd2 gxf6 11 Bxc4 (Diagram 36)

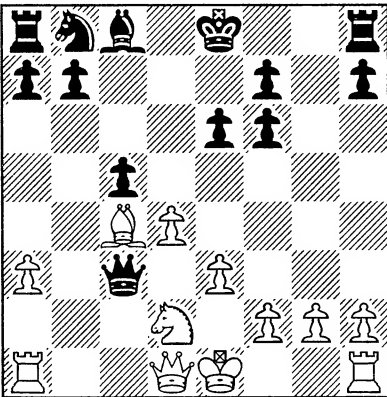


Diagram 36 (B)

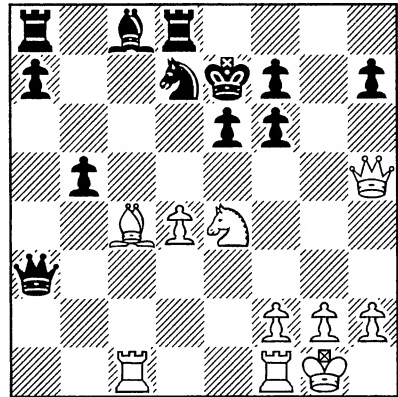


Diagram 37 (W)

11...Ke7?!

Black reasons that as his king lacks a safe home on either flank, it might as well as shelter on e7, while preparing ...Rd8. This approach fails to convince, although I'm not too sure what Black should do, especially since 11...cxd4 12 Rc1 Qxa3 13 exd4 Nc6 14 0-0 retains promising compensation with both Ne4 and d4-d5 on the cards.

12 0-0 Rd8

Black might also go after the d4-pawn with 12...cxd4 13 Rc1 Qxa3 14 exd4 Rd8, but 15 Ne4 Nc6 (or 15...Nd7 16 Qh5, transposing to our main game) 16 Qh5 Rxd4 17 Qh4 Kd8 18 Rcd1! Rxd1 19 Rxd1+ Kc7 20 Nxf6 maintains a dangerous initiative in any case.

13 Rc1 Qxa3 14 Ne4 Nd7 15 Qh5



DANGEROUS WEAPON! White might be two pawns down, but his vastly superior development and king position more than compensate.

In D.Komarov-F.Bersoult, Maromme 1994, Black didn't last long: 15...cxd4 16 exd4 b5 (**Diagram 37**) 17 Bxe6! fxe6 18 Qxh7+ Ke8 19 Qh8+ Ke7 20 Qg7+ Ke8 21 Rc5! and 1-0. Mate follows on d6, f6 or via 21...Qa6 22 Rh5.

Conclusion

The sharp and theoretical Vienna can be an unpleasant opening to meet, especially at club level where it is pretty rare. However, with the gambits covered in this chapter White can ensure that it's actually Black who is surprised. Indeed, I remain rather baffled as to why theory has been silent on them for so long. I especially like the direct 5 e4 Bb4 6 Bxc4, but 5 Bg5 Bb4 6 a3 also has its charms, especially if White is happy to gain long-term compensation along Catalan lines.

Chapter Thirteen

Tricking the Tarrasch

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bf4!? (Diagram 1)

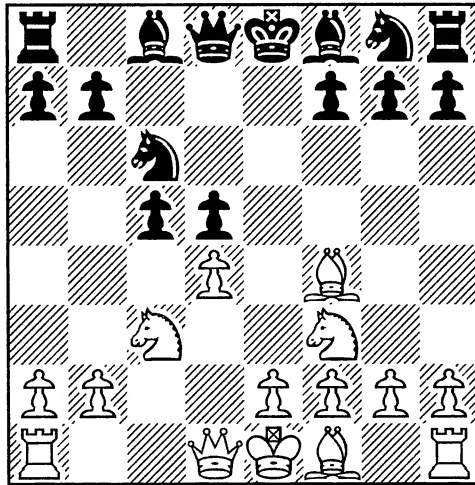


Diagram 1 (B)

The Tarrasch is one of those openings in which Black tends to be able to reel out his normal moves in the main lines, so it's nice to set him some new problems and to get him thinking early on. I've actually examined three white systems in this

chapter: a solid reputable one against the standard Tarrasch, and another that seems quite promising for those who may face the Hennig-Schara Gambit (sometimes known as the Tarrasch Gambit). The third one is, I'm sure you will agree, fascinating, but probably not sound. Enterprising players such as Shakhriyar Mamedyarov and Simon Williams have been successful with this sharp gambit, but Williams seems to have found a good response for Black so although I can't personally recommend this line, I'm sure that some of you dice-rollers may be tempted!

Let's start with a high-level game that illustrates the positional approach. This is an ideal choice for those who like to keep control without taking undue risks, and, despite appearances, this quiet line can have some bite.

□ T.Radjabov ■ A.Grischuk

Dubai (rapid) 2002

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bf4

This makes a change from the usual 6 g3. It's less well-known and probably not inferior.

6...Nf6 7 e3 cxd4 8 Nxd4 Bd6?!

A routine-looking move that turns out to have serious drawbacks.

9 Bb5! (Diagram 2)

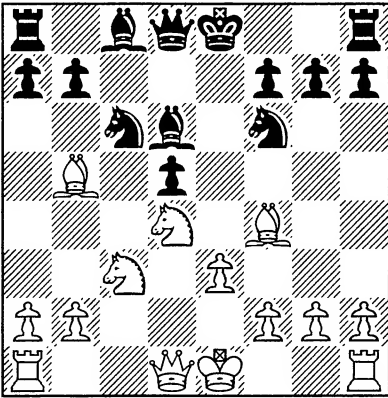


Diagram 2 (B)

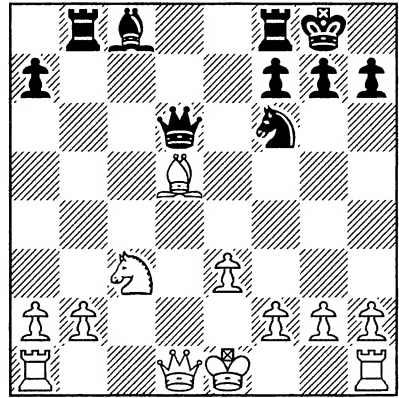


Diagram 3 (B)

Natural and surprisingly awkward to meet.

9...0-0

Giving up a pawn in an attempt to gain some activity is Black's best chance. Otherwise the obvious move 9...Qc7 fails to 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Nxd5! (pinning and winning a pawn!) 11...Nxd5 12 Qxd5 Qa5+ 13 Ke2 Qxb5+ 14 Qxb5 cxb5 15 Bxd6, and 9...Qd7 also costs material: 10 Qa4 Bxf4 11 Nxc6 a6 12 Nd4 axb5 13 Qxa8.

10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Bxc6 Rb8 12 Bxd6 Qxd6 13 Bxd5 (Diagram 3) 13...Nxd5

Grischuk no doubt considered keeping the queens on the board, but after 13...Qb4 14 0-0 Ba6 15 Re1 Qxb2, White has 16 Rc1 Rfc8 17 Bc6!, exploiting Black's vulnerable back rank. Then Black is low on compensation as 17...Rxc6?? fails to 18 Rb1.

14 Qxd5 Qxd5 15 Nxd5 Rxb2 16 0-0 Be6

Black's pieces now become quite active, giving him realistic drawing chances.

17 Ne7+ Kh8 18 a3 Rd8 19 Nc6 Rdd2 20 Rad1 g6 21 Rxd2 Rxd2 22 Ra1 Kg7 23 h4

Here 23 Nxa7 would only complicate White's task after 23...Bd7.

23...a6 24 Nd4 (Diagram 4)

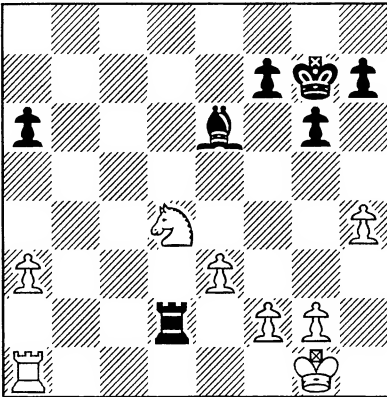


Diagram 4 (B)

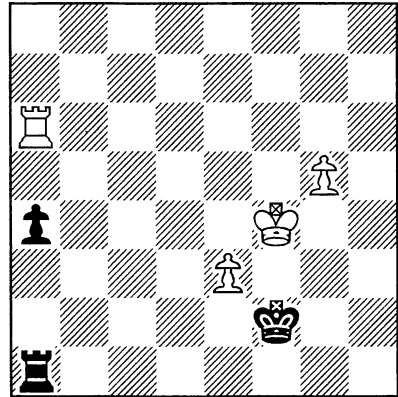


Diagram 5 (B)

24...a5?!

Black should probably retain the minor pieces with 24...Bd7!? 25 Rc1 Ra2 26 Rc7 (or 26 Rc3) 26...Be8! 27 Rc3, when White faces significant technical difficulties.

25 Rc1 Rd3 26 Nxe6+ fxe6 27 Rc7+ Kf6

Going to h6 is no better: 27...Kh6 28 Re7 Rxa3 29 Rxe6 Kh5 30 g3 Kg4 31 Kg2, and White should be able to win.

28 Rxh7 Rxa3 29 g4 Ra4 30 g5+ Kf5 31 Kg2 Ra1

Or 31...Rb4 32 f3 a4 33 Kg3 Rb3 34 e4+ Ke5 35 Ra7 a3 36 Ra6, which is also promising for White.

32 Rf7+ Kg4 33 Rf4+ Kh5 34 Re4 e5 35 Rxe5 Kxh4 36 Kf3 a4 37 Kf4 Kh3 38 Re6 Kg2 39 Rxg6 Kxf2 40 Ra6 (Diagram 5)

White now wins easily despite having split pawns.

40...Ke2 41 e4 Kd3 42 Ke5 Kc4 43 g6 Kb3 44 g7 Rg1 45 Kf6 a3 46 Kf7 a2 47 g8Q 1-0

Some Black players vary early on with a notorious gambit, which is known either as the Tarrasch Gambit or the Hennig-Schara Gambit. This line almost deserves *Dangerous Weapons* status itself, except that if White knows his stuff he should be able to keep the better chances. Here's an example:

□ **V.Golod** ■ **F.Manca**

Lido Estensi 2003

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 cxd4!? (Diagram 6)

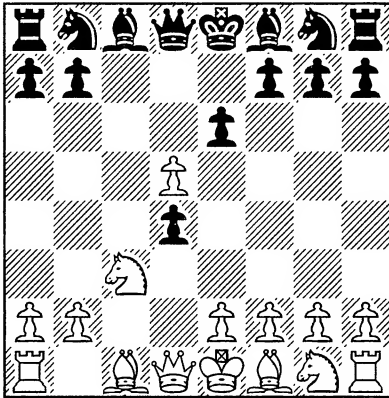


Diagram 6 (W)

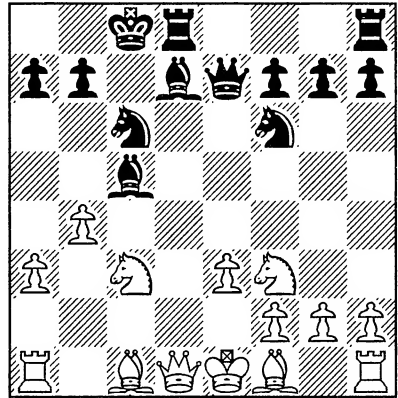


Diagram 7 (B)

It's Black's turn to try and create some chaos in the centre!

5 Qa4+!

I tend to prefer this move to the immediate 5 Qxd4. Then after 5...Nc6 6 Qd1 exd5 7 Qxd5, Black can in any case transpose with 7...Bd7, but he also can try and generate play without the queens with 7...Be6!?, which is a line I prefer to avoid. We now follow a long and common sequence.

5...Bd7 6 Qxd4 exd5 7 Qxd5 Nc6 8 Nf3 Nf6 9 Qd1 Bc5 10 e3 Qe7 11 a3 0-0-0 12 b4! (Diagram 7)

The key move of my suggested system. White first makes some progress on the

queenside, seizing space and attacking chances, before worrying about his king.

12...Bg4 13 Bd2 Bd4 14 Qc2 Bxf3

In his notes, Golod shows that the wild move 14...Ne4? actually loses against precise play: 15 Nxd4 Nxd4 (if 15...Nxd2, then 16 Nxc6 bxc6 17 Bd3, etc.) 16 exd4 Nxd2+ (16...Ng3+ is met by 17 Ne2+: yes, it's check!) was seen in K.Wornath-G.Euler, Wiesbaden 1998, and now Golod points out 17 Ne2+! Kb8 18 Qxd2, with a winning position.

15 gxf3 Kb8 16 Be2 Bxc3 17 Bxc3 Nd5

White has two bishops and an extra pawn, but Black is active and has the safer king. Nevertheless, analysis suggests that White should be on top.

18 b5 Rc8

The lesser evil was 18...Nxc3 19 bxc6 Nxe2 20 Kxe2 Qc7 21 Rhc1, when White's advantage is kept to a minimum.

19 Bxg7

But not 19 bxc6? Rxc6, when Black wins back the piece with a good position.

19...Nxe3 (Diagram 8)

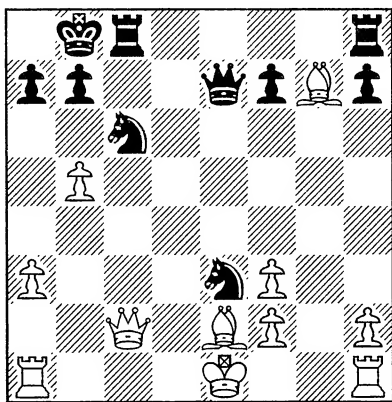


Diagram 8 (W)

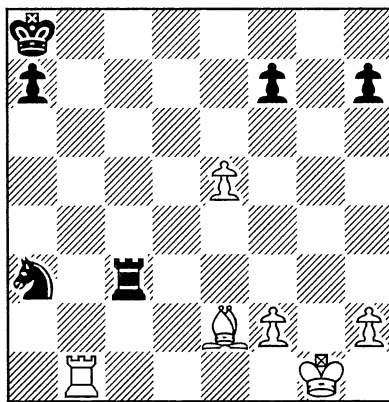


Diagram 9 (W)

White seems to keep sufficient control of events after 19...Ncb4 20 Qe4 Nc2+ 21 Kf1 Qd7 22 Be5+ Ka8 23 Rd1 Qh3+ 24 Kg1, etc.

20 Qe4

It seems that 20 fxe3! may be even more convincing, as suggested by Golod. After 20...Qh4+ 21 Kf1 Qh3+ 22 Kg1 Rhg8 23 Qb2 f6 24 Qxf6 Rc7 25 Kf2 Rcxg7 26 Bf1 (or even 26 e4!?) 26...Qd7 (if 26...Rg2+, then simply 27 Ke1!) 27 Qc3 Ne7 28 Qd4, White should be able to convert his two-pawn advantage.

20...Qxe4 21 fxe4 Nc2+ 22 Kf1 Rhg8 23 bxc6

Golod was also tempted by 23 Rg1!?, after which, for example, 23...Nxa1 24 bxc6 Nb3 25 Be5+ Ka8 26 Rxb8 Rxb8 27 c7 Nc5 28 Bh5, sees the c-pawn cost Black dear.

23...Rxb8 24 cxb7 Kxb7 25 Rb1+ Ka8 26 e5 Rc3 27 Rg1 Rxb1+ 28 Kxb1 Nxa3 (Diagram 9)

Material is equal for the moment, but White's bishop is the superior minor piece, while Black's king and isolated pawns are vulnerable to attack.

29 Rb4 a5 30 Ra4 Kb7 31 Rxa5 Kb6 32 Ra6+ Kc5 33 Ra7

White picks off the kingside and just has to be careful in the technical phase.

33...Kd4 34 Rxf7 Kxe5 35 Rxh7 Nc2 36 Re7+ Kf4 37 Rd7 Ra3 38 Rd1 Ke5 39 Kg2 Ra2 40 Kf1 Nd4 41 Bg4 Nb5 42 Rd3 Nd6 43 Re3+ Kf4 44 h3 Ne4 45 Be2 Rc2 46 Rf3+ Ke5 47 Rf8 Rc1+ 48 Kg2 Rc2 49 Kf3 Ng5+ 50 Kg4 Ne4 51 f4+ Ke6 1-0

Looking a Little Deeper

1. Tricking the Tarrasch

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bf4!?

My recommended approach. White aims for harmonious development, involving e3 followed by developing the light-squared bishop on the f1-a6 diagonal.

6...Nf6

After 6...Bg4, ECO gives 7 Qb3 Qd7 8 Nxd5 0-0-0 9 e4 Bxf3 10 gxf3 Nxd4 11 Qc3, and Kasparov 7 Ne5!? cxd4 8 Nxc6 bxc6 9 Qxd4 Nf6 10 Be5. White has an edge in both cases.

7 e3 (Diagram 10)

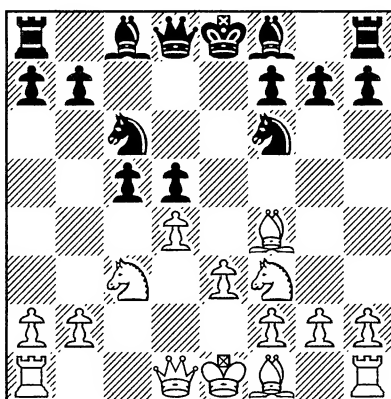


Diagram 10 (B)

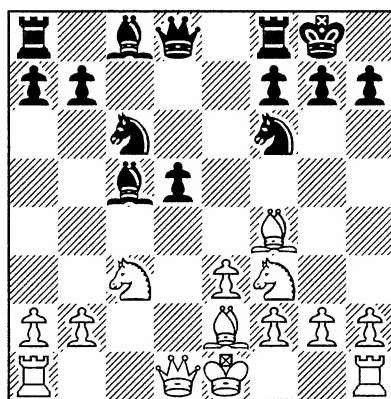


Diagram 11 (W)

7...c4

Some Tarrasch players, when given the option, quite like to gain space in this manner in various lines. The two main alternatives lead to a more open game:

a) 7...cxd4 8 Nxd4 Bb4 (8...Bd6?! 9 Bb5 0-0 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Bxc6, doesn't give Black enough for his pawn, as we've seen in Radjabov-Grischuk) 9 Bb5! (I prefer this to 9 Be2 Ne4 10 Rc1 0-0 11 0-0 Bxc3 12 bxc3 Qa5 13 c4 Nc3! – rather than 13...dxc4?! 14 Bxc4 Nxd4 15 Qxd4 Nd2 16 Bd6!, when White was on top in J.Speelman-M.Illescas Cordoba, Barcelona 1989 – 14 Rxc3 Qxc3 15 Nb5 Qb2 16 cxd5!? Ne5 17 Nc7 Rb8 18 Bb5 Rd8, when White had enough compensation but perhaps no more in R.Damaso-A.Frois, Porto 2000) 9...Bd7 10 0-0 0-0 (after 10...Bxc3 11 bxc3 0-0, White's bishops give him a pull following the simple 12 Bd3) 11 Rc1 Rc8 12 Nxc6 Bxc6 13 Be2 Ne4 14 Be5 Qg5 15 f4 Qd8 16 Bxg7! saw White seize control in A.Graf-D.Lorino Nieto, Ourense 2007.

b) The position after 7...Be7 8 Be2 0-0 9 dxc5 Bxc5 (**Diagram 11**) may seem familiar.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION! We have transposed to a line of the 5 Bf4 Queen's Gambit Declined that is considered to be slightly better for White.

After the typical moves 10 0-0 Be6 11 Rc1 Rc8, there are a number of approaches. Here are some sample lines to give you a rough idea of what is going on:

a) 12 Bg5 Be7 13 a3 h6 14 Bh4 Ne4 15 Bxe7 Nxe7 16 Nxe4 dxe4 17 Nd4, with a small pull was S.Gligoric-B.Spasky, Hastings 1965/66.

b) 12 a3 Bb6!? (after the slower 12...h6 13 Bg3 Bb6 14 Ne5 Ne7 15 Na4 Ne4 16 Rxc8 Bxc8 17 Nf3 Bd7, of R.Fischer-B.Spasky, World Championship (Game 14), Reykjavik 1972, White can retain a typical edge due to his blockade of the IQP with 18 Nxb6 Qxb6 19 Be5, according to Gligoric) 13 Na4 Ne4 14 b4 Qf6 15 Qd3 g5! 16 Nxb6 axb6 17 Bg3 h5, gave Black counterplay in N.Dzagnidze-A.Graf, Kavala 2007.

c) As things stand 12 Ne5! (**Diagram 12**) looks the most challenging: for example, 12...Bd6 13 Nxc6 bxc6 14 Qa4 Bxf4 15 Qxf4 c5 16 Rfd1 Qb6 17 b3 h6 18 h3 a5 19 Na4 Qa7 20 Qd6 saw White soon win a pawn in R.Ruck-A.Savanovic, Banja Lucka 2007.

Returning to 7...c4:

8 Be2 (Diagram 13) 8...Bb4

Again Black has alternatives:

a) After 8...Qb6 it's worth noting that Kasparov suggests the sporting 9 Qc2!?. It's then rather tempting for Black to exploit the white queen's position, but this doesn't seem to be a very good idea: 9...Nb4 (after 9...Bf5? 10 Qxf5 Qxb2 11 0-0 Qxc3 12 Bg5, White has a big advantage) 10 Qb1 g6 11 0-0 Bf5 12 Qd1, and Black's aggression is prone to rebound on him as his development is far from complete,

such as after 12...Bg7 (or 12...Bc2 13 Qd2 Bd3 14 Be5 Rd8 15 b3) 13 b3 Bc2 14 Qd2 cxb3 15 Nb5!, with some advantage.

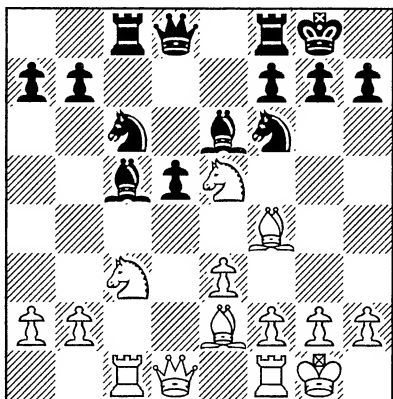


Diagram 12 (B)

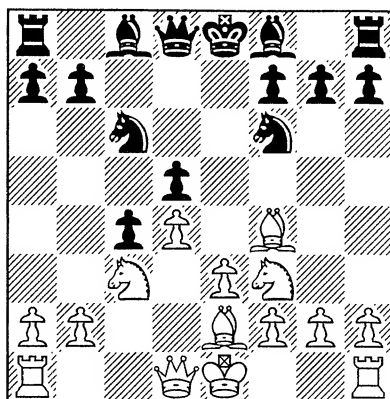


Diagram 13 (B)

b) Simpler is 8...Be7, offering Black a solid game with good chances to equalize: 9 0-0 0-0 10 Ne5 Be6 (after the 10...Bf5 11 b3 Qa5 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Na4 c3 14 Bd3 Bg6, of A.Tonoian-T.Khakimov, Dagomys 2004, White's simplest is to pile up on the c-pawn with 15 Bxg6 hxg6 16 Rc1 Nh5 17 Be5 f6 18 Bg3 Bb4 19 Qd3) 11 Nxc6 (after 11 Bf3 Rc8 12 Rc1 Qb6 13 Qe2 Rfd8, White managed to win despite, rather than because of, the wild 14 g4?! in E.Ragozin-J.Markiewicz, Krakow 1999; instead 14 Rfd1 h6 15 Nxc6 bxc6 16 Qc2, might be worth a small pull) 11...bxc6 12 b3 (**Diagram 14**) 12...Qa5 13 Na4 (13 Qc2!? is a solid way to continue) 13...Rac8 14 bxc4 dxc4 15 Nb2 Qb4 16 Qc2 Nd5?! (much better is 16...c5!, which equalizes) 17 Nxc4 Nxf4 18 exf4 Bf6 19 Rab1, and further play clearly confirmed White's ascendancy in J.Gonzalez-H.Leyva, Cienfuegos 1991.

9 0-0 0-0

Black can try to be more pushy on the queenside:

a) 9...Qa5 10 Qc2 Ne7 11 a3 Bxc3 12 bxc3 Ng6 13 Be5 Ne4 was S.Savchenko-S.Safin, Dieren 2002, and now Magomedov has pointed out that White obtains an advantage with 14 Bxc4! Qxc3 15 Qa4+ Bd7 16 Bb5 Bxb5 17 Qxb5+ Qc6 18 Rab1.

b) Following 9...Bxc3!? 10 bxc3 Ne4, White managed to keep a small edge with precise play in A.Baburin-V.Akopian, San Francisco 2002, after 11 Qc2! Bf5 12 Qb2 Qe7 13 Ne5 Nxe5 14 Bxe5 f6 15 Bf4 g5 16 f3 Nxc3 17 Qxc3 gxf4 18 e4 Bg6 19 exd5.

10 Ne5 (Diagram 15)

When studying opening variations, it's often quite helpful to compare analogous ideas. Thus White might consider 10 Qc2!? h6 11 Ne5: for example, 11...Be6 12

Nxc6 bxc6 13 Na4?! (here I quite like White after 13 b3!) 13...Ne4 14 f3 Nf6 15 b3 Nh5 was A.Mikhalchishin-R.Vera, Havana 1982, in which Black had achieved full equality.

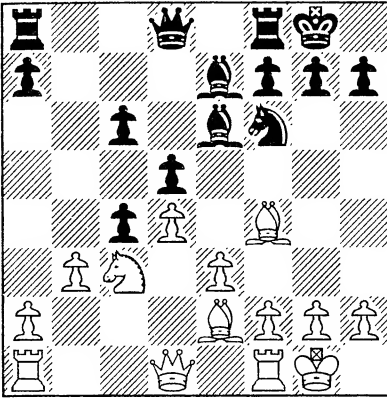


Diagram 14 (B)

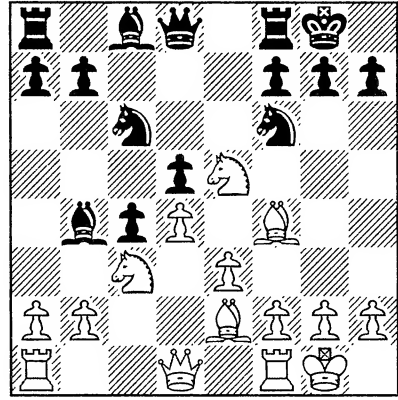


Diagram 15 (B)

After 10 Ne5, Black has a few options:

- a) 10...h6 11 Qc2 Be6 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Na4 Qc8 14 b3 Bf5 was S.Safin-Z.Mamedjarova, Dubai 2004, and now I suggest 15 Qc1! cxb3 (15...Qa6?! is suspicious due to 16 a3 Be7 17 Nb2) 16 axb3 Ne4 17 Rd1, with a pull.
- b) Following 10...Qa5 White keeps the better options after a typical continuation, such as 11 Nxc6 (or 11 Qc2 Be6 12 Bf3 without capturing on c6) 11...bxc6 12 Qc2 Be6 13 Bf3 Rfe8 14 Rfc1.
- c) The latest word goes 10...Bxc3 11 bxc3 Ne4 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Rc1 g5 14 Be5 f6 15 f3! (it's important to strike back and prevent Black from keeping things under control) 15...Nxc3 16 Rxc3 fxe5 17 dxe5 Qb6 18 Qe1 Rb8 19 Kh1 Qb2 20 f4, with some initiative and, most importantly, the safer king for White in V.Tkachiev-V.Yemelin, Russian Team Championship 2006.

Summing up, it seems to me that Black doesn't have an easy task against 6 Bf4.

2. Taming the Hennig-Schara Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 cxd4!? 5 Qa4+ Bd7

Black can also play the hard-to-believe 5...b5!? (**Diagram 16**).

This move is not *that* bad, but White should be able to keep the advantage and after the best reply 6 Qxd4, there doesn't seem to be any easy way to equalize:

a) 6...b4 7 Nb5 Nf6 (if 7...a6 then 8 dxe6!) 8 d6 Nc6 9 Qc4 Kd7 10 Nf3 Ba6 11 a4

Bxd6 12 Bf4, looks horrible for Black, S.Saric-V.Kaludjeric, Serbia 2002.

b) 6...a6 7 Nf3 b4 was R.Knechtel-H.Fuchsgraber, Untergriesbach 2003, and now 8 Na4! is awkward to meet.

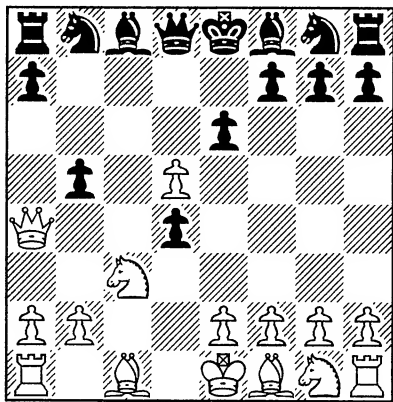


Diagram 16 (W)

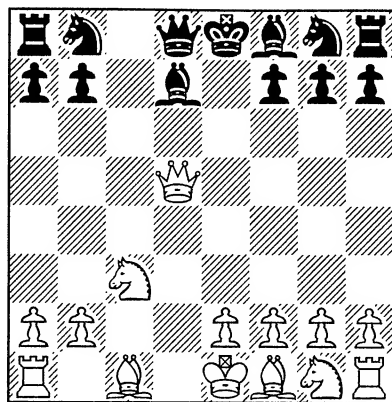


Diagram 17 (B)

c) The best of the bunch is 6...Nc6. After the logical 7 Qd2 exd5 8 Qxd5 Bd7, Black obtains some play, although it's not quite enough for a pawn: for example, 9 Bg5 (solid and slightly favourable is 9 e3 Nf6 10 Qd1 a6 11 Nf3 Qb6 12 Be2 Rd8 13 0-0 Bf5 14 Bd2 Be7 15 a3 0-0 16 b4, as in M.Sadler-M.Apicella, Linares 1995) 9...Nf6 10 Qd2 (Bareev gives 10 Bxf6!? Qxf6 11 e3, with a clear advantage, but this is optimistic and in any case it's not yet necessary to give up the bishop) 10...Be7 (if 10...Be6, then 11 Qxd8+ Rxd8 12 Bxf6 gxf6 13 e3 a6 14 Rd1 Rxd1+ 15 Kxd1 clearly favours White) 11 e3 a6 12 Nf3 0-0 13 Be2 Be6 14 Qxd8 Rfxd8 15 0-0, and White keeps his nose in front.

6 Qxd4 exd5 7 Qxd5 (Diagram 17) 7...Nc6

After 7...Nf6, most players just transpose with 8 Qd1, but there is nothing wrong with 8 Qxb7!?

8 Nf3 Nf6 9 Qd1 Bc5 10 e3 Qe7 11 a3 0-0-0

In my youth I was faced with 11...0-0 a few times and didn't find it that easy for White to convert his extra pawn. White should basically aim to catch up with development and be patient: for example, 12 Be2 (or 12 Qc2!?) 12...Rfd8 13 Qc2 Rac8 14 0-0 Be6 15 Bd2 Bb6 16 Ng5 Bc7 17 Rad1 saw White gradually consolidate his advantage in S.Koutsin-J.Mihailovs, Rymarov 1999.

12 b4! (Diagram 18)

Expanding on the queenside with gain of tempo. Black now faces an important choice and I'm not sure what his best is:

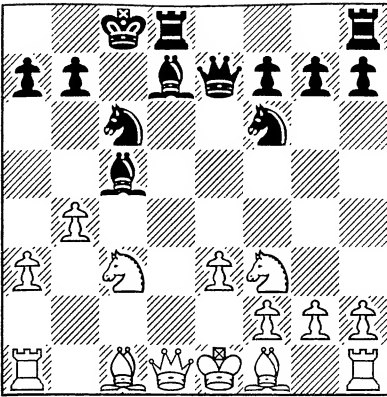


Diagram 18 (B)

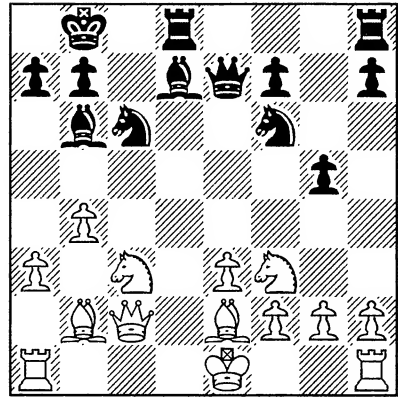


Diagram 19 (B)

a) 12...Bg4 was seen, above, in Golod-Manca.

b) 12...Bf5 is possible, but didn't convince after 13 Bd2 Bb6 14 Be2 g5 (a typical counter-punch whether White castles or not) 15 0-0 g4 16 Nh4 Be6 17 Qc2 Kb8 18 Rfd1 Rc8 19 Qb2 Nd7 20 g3 Rhd8 21 Rac1, and White kept the advantage in G.Markotic-J.Kappler, French League 1995.

c) After 12...Bb6 13 Qc2 Kb8 14 Be2, we reach a position that can occur from a number of move orders:

c1) 14...Rc8!? 15 Bb2 Ne5 16 Nd4 Bxd4 17 exd4 Nc4 18 0-0 Qd6 19 Rad1 Ng4 20 g3 Qh6 21 h4 Nxb2 22 Qxb2, never gave Black quite enough for his pawn in R.Soffer-L.Slutzky, Tel Aviv 1995.

c2) The main move is 14...g5, after which 15 Bb2 (**Diagram 19**) 15...g4 (instead 15...Rc8 16 Rd1 g4 17 Nh4 Ne5 18 Nf5 Qf8 19 Nd6 Rc6 20 Qd2 gave White a clear advantage in D.Dumitrache-M.Odorheiu, Secuiesc 1995) 16 Nh4!? (possible is 16 Nd2, but I quite like the idea of preparing to hop into the f5-square) 16...Rhe8 17 0-0 (delaying castling doesn't always mean forgetting about it completely!) 17...Nh5 18 g3?! (here the superior 18 Nf5! gives White a comfortable advantage) 18...Nf4 19 exf4 Nd4 20 Qd1 Bc6? (simply 20...Nxe2+ 21 Nxe2 Qxe2 22 Be5+ Rxe5 23 fe5 Qxe5 24 Rc1 gives Black good compensation due to his powerful bishop-pair) 21 Bxg4 saw White obtain too much for the queen in P.Petran-Z.Szabo, Budapest 1994.

The Hennig-Schara Gambit has surprise value for the unprepared, but after reading this chapter you will not only be well-prepared, but should count on obtaining an advantage!

Trashing the Tarrasch or Bust!

Finally, a line which may suit those who have an early dinner engagement. Basically White burns his bridges as early as move five in order to go all out for a quick win...whatever the risk! Play through the following game and you'll see what I mean.

□ **S.Mamedyarov** ■ **G.Ginsburg**

Mainz (rapid) 2007

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 e4!? dxe4 6 Bc4 cxd4 7 Qb3 (Diagram 20)

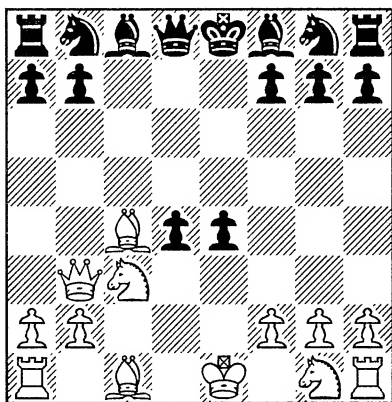


Diagram 20 (B)

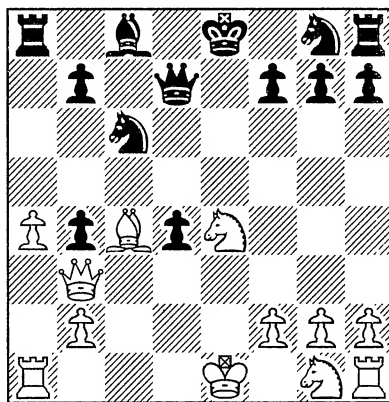


Diagram 21 (W)

White aims for the Achilles' heel on f7 in good old-fashioned gambit-style.

7...Qd7?!

On the evidence of this game, this move is as almost as dubious as it is ugly.

8 Nxe4 Nc6 9 Bd2!

Wisely preventing 9...Bb4+ when Black develops with tempo.

9...a5

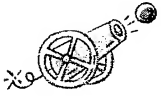
After 9...Qf5, White maintains the pressure with 10 Ne2 Be7 11 f3, and 9...Qe7 also seems inferior, this time because of 10 Kf1!

10 a4 Bb4?

This turns out badly. Instead, just about playable is 10...Nf6!?, intending 11 Nxf6+ gxf6 12 Ne2 (or perhaps 12 0-0-0 Bg7) 12...Bd6 13 0-0 0-0.

11 Bxb4 axb4 (Diagram 21) 12 Bxf7+!

I bet that hurt!



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Ginsburg looks all at sea in this sharp, open position. Mamedyarov's choice of opening has most certainly been a success!

12...Kf8

After 12...Qxf7?? White wins with 13 Nd6+.

13 Bxg8 Rxc8 14 Ne2 Qe6 15 Qd3 b6?!

A lesser evil would have been 15...Qg6, after which 16 0-0 Bf5 17 f3 Rd8 18 Rad1 leaves White with a positional advantage due to his superior structure and Black's vulnerable king.

16 Rc1 Ba6 17 Qf3+ Ke8 (Diagram 22)

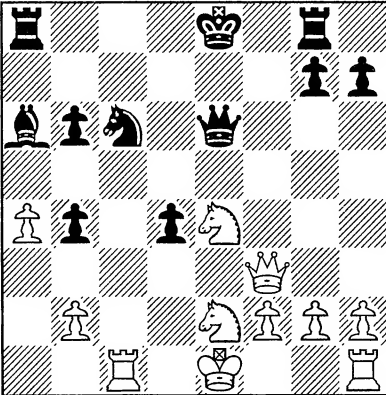


Diagram 22 (W)

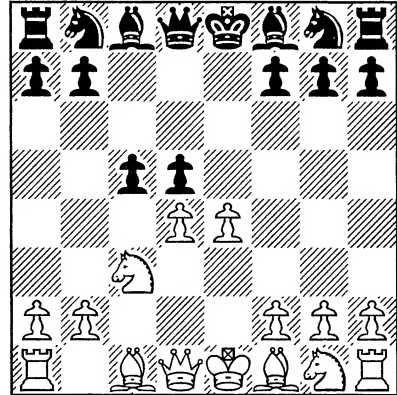


Diagram 23 (B)

18 Rxc6!

A deadly blow.

18...Qxc6 19 Nf6+ Qxf6 20 Qxa8+ Kf7 21 Qxa6 1-0

This wild system won't appeal to everyone, especially as at the time of writing a satisfactory antidote has been found for Black, but will your opponent know what to do?

Looking A Little Deeper

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 e4?! (Diagram 23)



ROLL THE DICE! This is the sort of line that often causes havoc in practice, but is objectively dubious.

5...dxe4

The principled move. Instead White seems to be better after 5...Nc6 6 exd5 Nxd4 7 Nge2: for example, 7...Qb6 8 Nxd4 cxd4 9 Bb5+ Kd8 10 Qe2 Nf6 11 Bg5 dxc3 12 Qe8+ Kc7 13 Qxf7+ Bd7 14 Bxd7 Nxd7 15 Rc1 Qxb2 16 0-0 Bd6 17 Qxg7 Rag8 18 Rxc3+ Kb8 19 Rc8+! won serious material in P.Leonhardt-E.Znosko Borovsky, Nuremberg 1906.

6 Bc4! (Diagram 24)

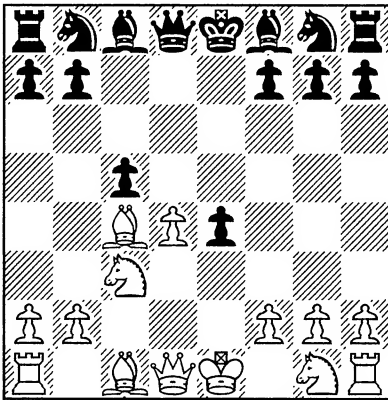


Diagram 24 (B)

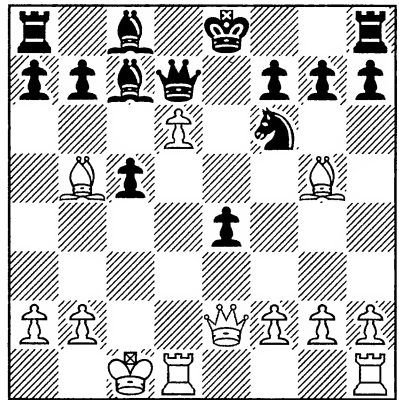


Diagram 25 (B)

This move seems to revitalize White's gambit approach. Over the years, a number of players have experimented with 6 d5?!, but 6...Nf6 (or 6...f5!? 7 Bf4 Bd6 8 Nh3 a6 9 Qa4+, with a murky position) 7 Bg5 Be7 8 Bb5+ Nfd7, looks promising for Black.

6...Nf6

Already Black has to make a difficult choice. His alternatives are as follows:

a) 6...Nc6 doesn't seem to equalize: 7 d5! (I don't trust White's play after 7 Bf4?! cxd4 8 Nb5 Bb4+ 9 Kf1 Kf8 10 a3 Be7 11 h4 Nf6 12 Nc7 Rb8 13 Nb5 Ra8 14 Nc7, and a draw was agreed in S.Williams-J.Cooper, British League 1997, but Black could have played on with 14...Bg4 15 f3 Rc8 16 fxg4 Rxc7) 7...Nd4 (or 7...Ne5 8 Nxe4 Nxc4 9 Qa4+ Bd7 10 Qxc4, when White keeps a small pull following the logical sequence 10...Qe7 11 Bg5 f6 12 Be3 b5 13 Qd3 c4 14 Qd4 Qe5 15 Nf3 Qxd4 16 Nxd4 f5 17 Nc3 Bb4 18 0-0-0, as he did in A.Summerscale-A.Gershon, Tel Aviv 1997) 8 Nge2 Nxe2 9 Qxe2 Nf6 10 Bg5 Be7 11 0-0-0 Qd6 12 Nb5 Qd7 13 d6 Bd8 14

Nc7+ Bxc7 15 Bb5 (**Diagram 25**), and White won in S.Mamedyarov-O.Boricsev, Abu Dubai 2005.

b) 6...cxd4 7 Qb3 (there is little mileage for White in 7 Nxe4?! Nc6 8 Nf3 Bb4+) with a further split:

b1) 7...Qe7? 8 Nd5, followed by 9 Bf4 already leaves Black in huge trouble.

b2) 7...Qd7 8 Nxe4 Nc6 9 Bd2 a5 10 a4 Bb4 11 Bxb4 axb4 12 Bxf7+! was pretty good for White in Mamedyarov-Ginsburg, as we've seen.

b3) A decent try for equality involves leaving the f-pawn to its fate: 7...Nf6!? 8 Bxf7+ Ke7 (**Diagram 26**) 9 Nb5 (9 Nce2? Nc6 10 Bd2 d3, is inadequate for White, as is 9 Nd5+? Kxf7 10 Nc7+ Kg6 11 Nxa8 Na6 12 Ne2 Bb4+, when Black was clearly better in A.Nadanian-M.Godena, Saint Vincent 2000) 9...Nc6 10 Bd2 Qb6 11 Ne2, and this position is not at all clear. Here is one plausible line: 11...Ne5 12 Bc4 Nxc4 13 Qxc4 Be6 14 Qc7+ Qxc7 15 Nxc7 Rc8 16 Nxe6 Kxe6 17 Nxd4+ Kf7 18 Ke2, with rough equality.

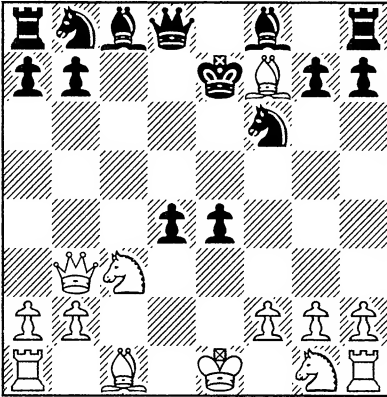


Diagram 26 (W)

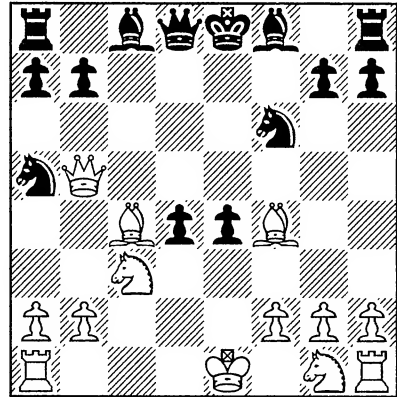


Diagram 27 (B)



BEWARE! Winning the f-pawn doesn't necessarily mean that Black is in trouble. Indeed, the defensive plan involving 6...cxd4 and 7...Nf6 needs further tests and shouldn't be underestimated.

Instead of 9 Nb5, more in the spirit of the variation is the wild 9 Bf4!?, as was recently ventured in the game S.Williams-R.Williamson, Liverpool 2007: 9...Nc6 (Williams gives 9...Na6 10 Rd1 Nc5 11 Qc4 Nd3+ 12 Rxd3 exd3 13 Nb5 as unclear) 10 Bc4 Na5 11 Qb4+ Ke8 12 Qb5+ (**Diagram 27**) 12...Bd7 (after 12...Nc6!? Williams gives 13 0-0-0! with the comment that 'Black is probably better but the position is still a mess'; Williams was willing to play this position as it looks like so much fun

and, of course, following the plausible line 13...Bd6 14 Nge2 Bxf4+ 15 Nxf4, White has a big lead in development and I doubt that he is worse) 13 Qe5+ Be7 14 Qxd4 Nxc4 15 Qxc4 Rc8 16 Qb3 Qa5 17 Nge2 Qa6 18 0-0 Be6 19 Qb5+ Kf7 (Black shouldn't be worse after 19...Qxb5! 20 Nxb5 Kf7) 20 Qxa6 bxa6 21 Ng3 Rhd8 22 Rfe1, and White's superior pawn structure gave him an edge.

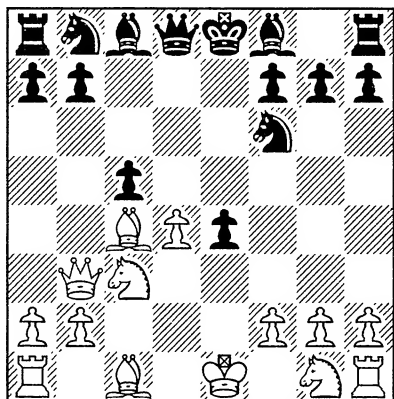


Diagram 28 (B)

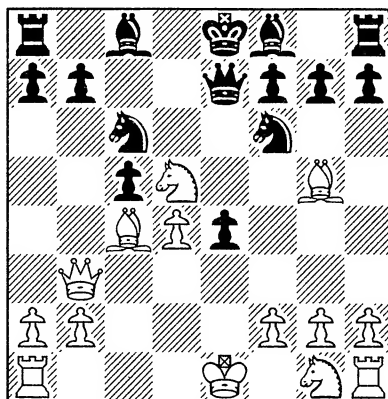


Diagram 29 (B)

7 Qb3 (Diagram 28) 7...Nc6!

From a wide array of possible defences, this move seems to be the best for Black. The alternatives don't look anything like as good:

- a) 7...Be7 8 Bxf7+ Kf8 9 dxc5 Nc6 (if 9...Na6!?, then I suggest 10 Be3 Nxc5 11 Bxc5 Bxc5 12 Nge2) 10 Bc4 Bxc5 11 Be3 Bxe3 12 fxe3 g6 13 Nge2 Kg7 14 0-0, and White was better in S.Williams-F.Jimenez Villena, Hastings 2003/04.
- b) 7...Be6 8 Bxe6 fxe6 9 Qxe6+! (less clear is 9 Qxb7 Nbd7 10 Nxe4 cxd4 11 Nxf6+ gxf6 12 Nf3 Rb8) 9...Qe7 10 Qc8+ Qd8 11 Qxb7 Nbd7 12 Nxe4 Be7 13 Nxf6+ Bxf6 14 Qe4+ Kf7 15 Qd5+ Kg6, and White should really have won in S.Williams-A.Van Lenan, Bunnratty 2007.
- c) 7...Bd6 8 Bxf7+ Ke7 9 Bg5 Rf8 10 Bc4 cxd4 11 Nxe4 leaves Black with a perilously-placed king, V.Rekhsan-M.Hughes, Edmonton 2004.
- d) Placing the queen on e7 is a fairly common recipe for development problems: 7...Qe7? 8 Bg5 Nc6 9 Nd5 (Diagram 29) 9...Nxd4 10 Qg3 Nf5 11 Qc7 was promising in R.Burnett-M.Noble, New York 1995, and 11 Bb5+!? Bd7 12 Bxd7+ Qxd7 13 Qe5+ might be even better.

8 Nge2

Black should also be better after 8 Bxf7+ Ke7 9 Bc4 Nxd4 10 Qd1 Bg4 11 Qd2 Qd7, as pointed out by Simon Williams. Also miserable is 8 dxc5 (or 8 Bf4 Nxd4!

9.Bxf7+ Ke7, which clearly favours Black) 8...Bxc5 9 Bxf7+ Kf8 10 Bd5 (if 10 Bc4 Na5 11 Qb5 Qc7, Black threatens to trap the queen, which is awkward) 10...Nxd5 11 Qxd5 Qxd5 12 Nxd5 Ne5 13 Be3 Nd3+ 14 Ke2 Bd6! 15 f3 Bf5, when White can struggle on, but certainly can't be satisfied with his lot.

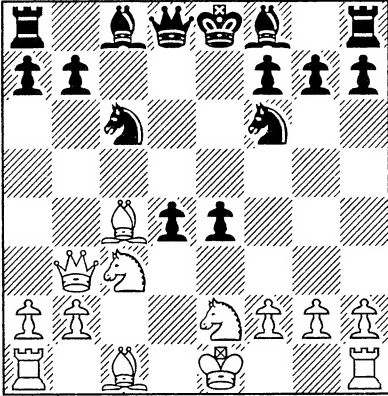


Diagram 30 (W)

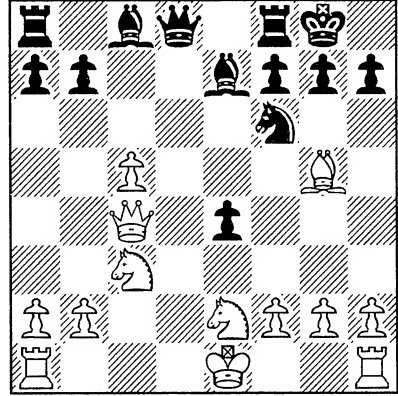


Diagram 31 (B)

8...Be7?!

Black should have the courage to play 8...cxd4! (**Diagram 30**):

a) 9 Nb5 is well met by 9...Bb4+.

b) 9 Bxf7+ Ke7 10 Bc4 dxc3 11 bxc3 Qc7 12 Bf4 Ne5 13 Bxe5 Qxe5 and White doesn't have enough.

c) 9 0-0 Na5 10 Qb5+ Bd7 11 Qe5+ Be7 12 Qxd4 Nxc4 13 Qxc4 Rc8 leaves Black clearly on top.

d) 9 Bf4 dxc3 10 Bxf7+ Ke7 11 Rd1 Na5! 12 Qxc3 Qb6 and Black is winning according to Simon Williams. White has some swindling chances after 13 Rd6!? Nc6 14 Bb3 Ke8 15 0-0 Bxd6 16 Bxd6 Bg4 17 Qg3, but objectively I have to agree.

9 dxc5 0-0 10 Bg5 Na5 11 Qa4 Nxc4 12 Qxc4 (**Diagram 31**) 12...Qe8

Black has sensibly returned the pawn to get castled and might now also consider 12...Qd3!?.

13 0-0 Be6 14 Qb4 Nd5 15 Nxd5 Bxd5 16 Rad1 Bc6 17 Bxe7 Qxe7 18 Nd4 Rac8 19 Rfe1 f5

We've been following H.Ellers-C.Flueckiger, Biel 1997 in which chances were balanced.

We can certainly conclude that 5 e4 is not for those with a delicate constitution! If

you are still tempted by it, take a good look at Simon Williams's suggested (and at the time of writing, unplayed) refutation (see the note to Black's 8th move), and then decide if you are willing to roll the dice!

Conclusion

Avoiding the theoretical main lines of the Tarrasch and settling for harmonious development with Bf4, Nf3, e3, etc. is a level-headed approach. This doesn't necessarily confer a significant advantage on White, but the resulting positions seem more difficult for Black to play at all levels. White generally gets a chance to saw away at Black's slightly vulnerable central pawn(s).

The line chosen against the Hennig-Schara Gambit doesn't avoid complications altogether, but seems to enable White to keep the best of both worlds: his queenside play is rapid and yet it keeps Black guessing about White's kingside intentions.

However, I don't personally trust the Mamedyarov Gambit with 5 e4!?, although there is certainly plenty of scope for independent analysis. See what you think.

Chapter Fourteen

Taking the Fun out of the Albin and Chigorin

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 a3 Nc6 5 e3 (Diagram 1)

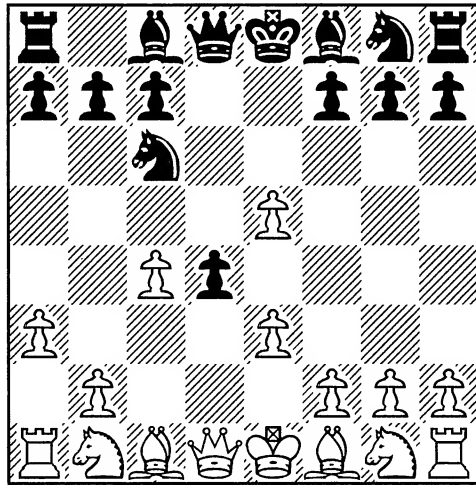


Diagram 1 (B)

The Albin Counter-Gambit and Chigorin's Defence are a couple of openings that are quite effective in practice. Many white players feel that these openings aren't that great, but don't have an effective antidote prepared. So when these lines actu-

ally crop up, it often turns out that the player who has Black knows his stuff much better.

I have in mind a line for White that not only takes Black out of his usual type of game, but also creates problems that put him under pressure. There isn't that much advance homework required and you can hit two tricky openings with one stone!

Black has a number of ways to try and defend, but none of them are that comfortable. In the following game the world's leading Chigorin *and* Albin expert was unable to equalize.

□ E. Bareev ■ A. Morozevich

Russian Championship, Elista 1997

1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6 3 e3 e5 4 dxex5 d4 5 a3 a5

Black has several alternatives at this point which I shall deal with below.

6 Nf3 Bc5 7 exd4 Bxd4 8 Be2 Nge7 9 0-0 0-0 10 Nc3 (Diagram 2)

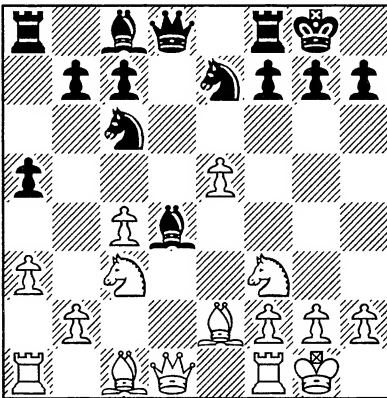


Diagram 2 (B)

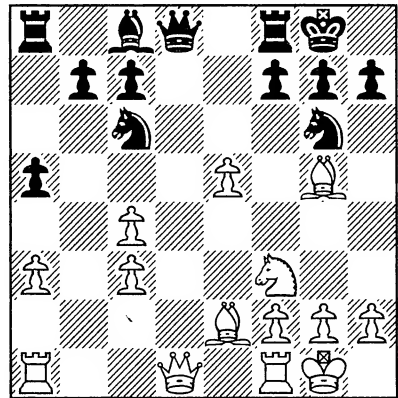


Diagram 3 (B)

After having a good look at the alternatives I now think that this is best.

10...Bxc3!?

The alternative is 10...Bxe5 11 Nxe5 Nxe5, regaining the pawn and reaching a solid-looking position. I have a tendency to prefer White and am not put off by Bareev's assessment of 'equal', nor by Morozevich and Barsky's line which continues '12 Bg5 f6 13 Be3 Be6 and Black would gradually have equalized'. For instance, 12 Bf4! N7g6 13 Bg3 Bf5 14 Qb3, looks to me worthy of being labelled 'a

pleasant edge for White’.

11 bxc3 Ng6 12 Bg5 (Diagram 3)

White has a broken structure and Black is likely to soon regain his pawn, but the influence of the bishop-pair shouldn’t be underestimated.

12...Qe8

Instead exchanging queens doesn’t ease Black’s task: 12...Qxd1 13 Raxd1 Re8 14 Nd4 f6 15 Be3 Nxd4 16 cxd4 fxe5 17 c5 exd4 18 Rxd4 Bf5 was somewhat better for White in M.Devereaux-‘Ghost’, online blitz 2002.

13 Re1 a4

John Watson gives ‘13...Ncxe5 14 Bd3 Nxf3+ 15 Qxf3 Qd7 16 Rad1 Qg4 with equality’. However, is this best play? For example, in this variation Bareev gives 14 Nd4 with an edge, while Morozevich and Barsky offer the line 13...Ngxe5 14 Nxe5 Nxe5 15 Qd5!?, again with a preference for White.

14 Be3 Qe7 15 Qc2 Re8 16 Bf1 (Diagram 4)

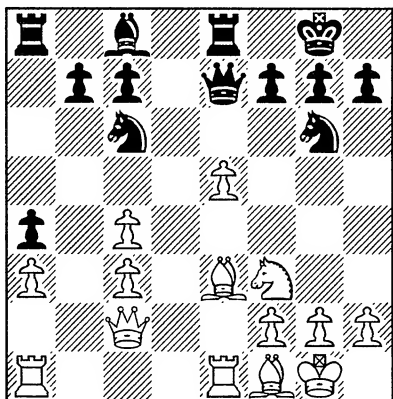


Diagram 4 (B)

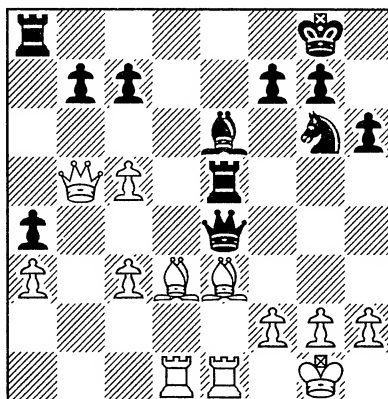


Diagram 5 (B)

16...Ncxe5

Again referring to Morozevich and Barsky’s notes in *The Chigorin According to Morozevich*, I see that they admit that White is better, such as after the alternative line 16...Bg4 17 Nd4 Ncxe5 18 f4 Nc6 19 Nxc6 bxc6 20 h3 Bd7 21 g3.

17 Nxe5 Qxe5 18 Qb2

This queen-activating manoeuvre keeps White on top. Instead 18 Bd2?! is met by 18...Bf5!, but 18 Bf4!? is considered the most dangerous by Morozevich and Barsky as it forces 18...Qxe1 19 Rxe1 Rxe1 20 Bxc7, which they think gives White a clear advantage.

18...Qe4 19 Qb5 Re5 20 c5 Be6 21 Rad1 h6 22 Bd3 (Diagram 5)

Black now has to decide where he should place his queen.

22...Qg4?

Everyone agrees that this is a mistake and that Black should have gone back with 22...Qc6. Then even in the resulting simplified position it's clear that White's all-powerful bishops give him an edge, such as with Morozevich and Barsky's 23 Qxc6 bxc6 24 f4! Rd5 25 c4 Rd7 26 h3 Ne7 27 g4.

23 h3 Qh5 24 Be2 Qh4 25 Qxb7 Re8 26 Qxc7 Rxe3 27 fxe3 (Diagram 6)

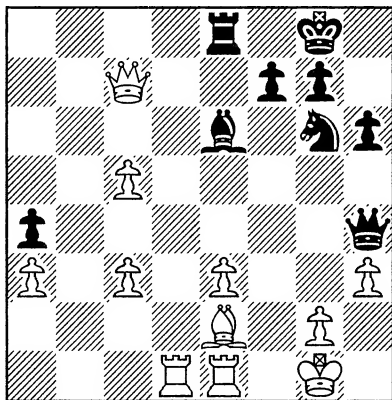


Diagram 6 (B)

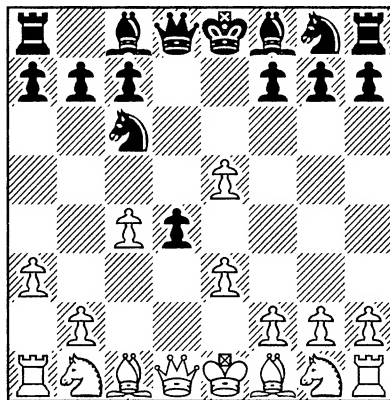


Diagram 7 (B)

27...Qg5

Tempting is 27...Bxh3, but despite White's exposed king he should win on material after 28 gxh3 Ne5 29 Kg2 Qg5+ 30 Kh2 Qxe3 31 Bh5.

28 Bf1

28 Kh2 Ne5 29 Bf1 has been suggested, but Black could then try 29...Bxh3!?. Therefore, simplest was 28 Kh1! when Black is well short of ammunition.

28...Bxh3 29 Qc6 Rc8

Bareev was more worried by 29...Rxe3 30 Rxe3 Qxe3+ 31 Kh1 Bg4, but White then wins easily with 32 Rd8+ Kh7 33 Qe8.

30 Qxa4 Be6 31 c6 h5 32 Rd2 h4 33 Qe4 Qc5 34 Red1 Rxc6 35 Rd8+ Kh7 36 Bd3 f5 37 Qf3 Kh6 38 Be2 Kg5 39 R8d5 Qxc3 40 Rf1 Kf6 41 Rxf5+ Ke7 42 Rf7+ Kd6 43 Rd1+ Kc5 44 Rb7 1-0

This game has been well scrutinized by the players and other analysts. It's interesting to compare their ideas and feelings about the relative chances.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Overall, I think it's fair to say that Black wasn't able to get the sort of position that he was after and that he was struggling to equalize. The same is true when we have a closer look.

Looking a Little Deeper

First of all, I suggest that we look at the Albin move order. Those variations specific to the Chigorin follow on below.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 a3

Side-stepping the ancient trap 4 e3?! Bb4+ 5 Bd2 dxe3! 6 Bxb4?? exf2+ 7 Ke2 fxg1=N+!. Better known is 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 g3, but then Morozevich's 5...Nge7!? has been scoring well of late.

4...Nc6

The normal move. Black could try and exploit White's slow fourth move and shore up his d-pawn with 4...c5. B.Moller-E.Rojann, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1939, continued 5 e3! Nc6 6 Nf3 f6!? 7 exd4 cxd4 8 exf6 Nxf6 9 Bd3 Be7 10 Bg5 Bg4 11 Nbd2 0-0, when I prefer White, such as after 12 0-0.

5 e3 (Diagram 7)



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: As we know from Bareev-Morozevich, this position also arises from the Chigorin move order **1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6 3 e3 e5 4 dxe5 d4 5 a3**.

At this point Black has several moves:

A: 5...dxe3

B: 5...a5

C: 5...Be6

D: 5...Nge7!?

Less critical options have also been tried:

a) Black can try to play in true-gambit style with 5...f6, after which 6 exf6 Qxf6 (or 6...Nxf6 7 Nf3 dxe3 8 Qxd8+ Nxd8 9 Bxe3 Ng4 10 Bf4 Bc5 11 Bg3 0-0 12 Be2, which left Black with nothing much for his pawn in A.Alexandrov-M.Kobalija, Krasnodar 1998) 7 exd4 Nxd4 8 Ne2 Ne6 9 Nbc3 Bd7 10 Nd5! (sensible is 10 Be3! 0-0-0 11 Qc2 Bc5 12 Nd5 Qf7 13 0-0-0) 10...Qe5 11 Qd3?! (more precise is 11 Be3! as 11...Qxb2?? loses quickly after 12 Nec3, etc.) 11...Ne7 12 f4 Qd6 13 Ng3 Nc5 14 Qf3 0-0-0, led to complications in M.Frolik-M.Chetverik, Frydek Mistek 1995. I really don't trust 5...f6, but this is how some Albin players will want to react.

b) 5...Bf5 (not the most stable square; if Black wants to develop his light-squared bishop it is better going to e6) 6 Nf3 dxe3 (or 6...d3 7 Nc3 f6 8 e4 Bg4, as in D.Ronneland-J.Furhoff, Copenhagen 1995, which can be well met by 9 exf6 Nxf6 10 Bxd3) 7 Qxd8+ Rxd8 8 Bxe3 Nge7 9 Nc3 Ng6 10 Nd5 Rc8 11 Nd4 Be6 (**Diagram 8**) was M.Hendricks-B.Finegold, Plymouth 1984, which led to White maintaining an edge after 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Nf4 Nxe5 14 Nxe6 fxe6, but 12 Nb5! may be even stronger: for example, 12...Bxd5 13 cxd5 Ncx5 14 Nxa7, with a clear advantage to White.

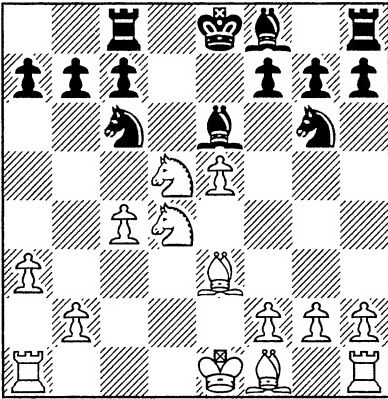


Diagram 8 (W)

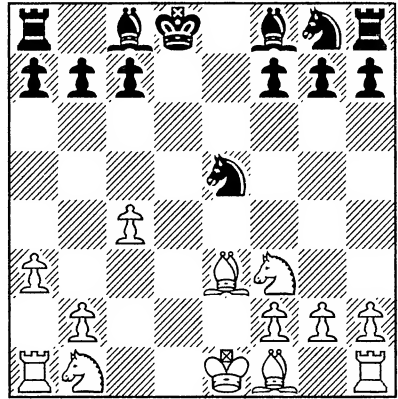


Diagram 9 (B)

A) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 a3 Nc6 5 e3 dxe3

A principled decision.

6 Qxd8+ Kxd8 7 Bxe3 Nxe5 8 Nf3!? (Diagram 9)

Noted theoreticians Shereshevsky, Rowson and Bronznik are all keen on this slightly surprising move. White accepts doubled pawns, but reasons that the open lines and his lead in development more than compensate. Indeed, Black's displaced king can be a problem for him in those lines where White continues to press.

White could try other moves but I don't think these give him anything: for example, 8 Nd2 Be6 9 0-0-0 Kc8 10 Ngf3, is given as an edge to White by Morozevich and Barsky, but Black is fine after 10...Ng4. While practical examples are few and far apart, if White wishes to maintain an opening pull 8 Nf3 is probably his best bet.

8...Nxf3+

Black has little to gain by trying to avoid this exchange: for example, 8...Bd6 9 Nc3 Bg4 10 0-0-0 (10 Ng5!? Be7 11 Nd5 also looks good) 10...Nxf3 11 h3 Bd7 12 gxf3

Nf6 13 Rg1 Rg8 14 Bg5 Be7 15 Bd3 Ke8 16 Ne4 Nxe4 17 Bxe4 was much better for White in Hsu Li Yang- E.Handoko, Singapore 1997.

9 gxf3 Be6 10 Nc3 (Diagram 10)

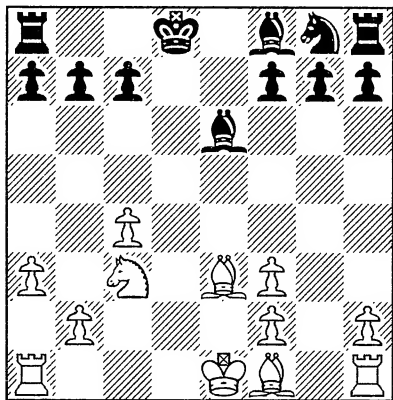


Diagram 10 (B)

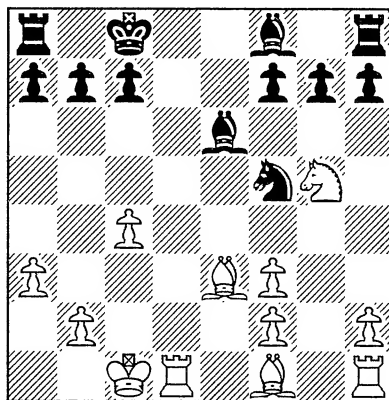


Diagram 11 (B)

10...Ne7

Bronznik points out that after 10...a6 11 0-0-0+ Ke8 12 Nd5 Rc8 13 c5, White always has the initiative.

11 0-0-0+ Kc8 12 Ne4



BEWARE! White should avoid the tempting 12 Nb5?!, which can be met by 12...a6 13 Na7+? Rxa7 14 Bxa7 b6, trapping the bishop with some advantage.

12...Nf5

Now 13 Bc5 b6 14 Bxf8 Rxf8 didn't look that sensational for White in D.Pedersen-E.Sobjerg, Aalborg 2000.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! 13 Ng5! (Diagram 11) is somewhat more critical.

Now Black may or may not capture on e3:

a) 13...Nxe3 14 fxe3 Bc5 15 Nxe6 fxe6 (after 15...Bxe3+ 16 Kc2 fxe6 17 Bh3, White has a useful initiative) 16 Bh3 Re8 17 Rd3 a5 18 Rg1 g6 19 Rg5! favours White be-

cause 19...Bd6 (if 19...b6 then 20 Re5) 20 c5 Bxh2? loses the bishop to 21 Rd2!.

b) 13...Be7 14 Nxe6 fxe6 15 Bh3 Rd8! (rather than 15...Bf6 16 Rhe1 Re8 when White has the cheeky pawn grab 17 Bxa7!) 16 Bd2! (better than 16 Rxd8+ Kxd8 17 Rd1+ Ke8 18 Bf4, when Black can even play 18...Bf6) 16...g6 17 Rhe1 Rd6 18 Bxf5 gxf5 19 Rg1 Kd7 20 Rg7 with a continuing initiative.

B) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 a3 Nc6 5 e3 a5 6 Nf3 Bc5

Although 6...Bg4 enables Black to regain the pawn quickly, after 7 Be2 dxe3 8 Bxe3 Bxf3 9 Bxf3 Qxd1+ 10 Bxd1 Nxe5 11 Be2 0-0-0 12 0-0 Nf6 13 Nc3, as in A.Delchev-'Alias', online blitz 2003, most white players would be happy with the advantage conferred by the bishop-pair in this open position.

7 exd4 (Diagram 12)

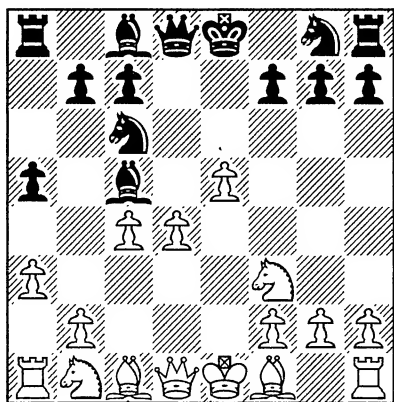


Diagram 12 (B)

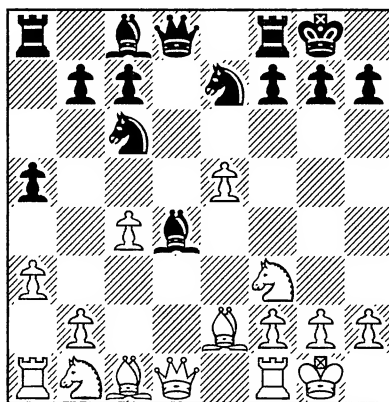


Diagram 13 (W)

7...Bxd4!

Instead 7...Nxd4 is best met by 8 Be3! (there are however no particular problems for Black after 8 Be2 Bf5 9 Nxd4 Bxd4 10 0-0 Bxe5 11 Bf3 Ne7! 12 Bxb7 Qxd1 13 Rxd1 Rb8, with equality as in M.Nilsson-S.Bodin, Stockholm 1996) because 8...Bg4 9 Be2 looks uncomfortable for the second player, as pointed out by Bareev: for example, 9...Nxf3+ (neither 9...Ne6 10 Qb3 a4 11 Qc3, nor 9...Nxe2 10 Qxe2 Bxe3 11 Qxe3 Ne7 12 Nbd2, improve Black's lot) 10 gxf3! Bxe3 11 Qxd8+ Rxd8 12 fxe3 leaves Black without any compensation for his pawn.

8 Be2

Here 8 Nxd4!? is worth investigating: 8...Qxd4 9 Nc3 (or perhaps 9 Qe2!?) 9...Qxd1+ (play transposes in the event of 9...Qxe5+ 10 Qe2 Be6 11 Qxe5 Nxe5 12

Bf4) 10 Nxd1 Be6 11 Nc3 Nxe5 12 Bf4 f6 13 0-0-0 Ne7 14 b3, and White will again rely on the bishop-pair to give him an edge, as he did in Petrovic-'Silicon', online blitz 2001.

8...Nge7 9 0-0 0-0 (Diagram 13)

After 9...Be6 10 Nc3 Bxe5 11 Nxe5 Nxe5 12 Qb3 Qc8 13 Nd5, White had his usual pleasant edge in A.Mirzoev-T.Bromann, Barbera del Valles 2005.

10 Nc3

The simplest and probably best move, as we saw in Bareev-Morozevich. Alternatively:

a) Following 10 Nxd4 Qxd4 11 Nc3, Black soon got into trouble in R.Leitao-F.Vivaldo, Sao Paulo 1998, with 11...Qxd1 12 Rxd1 Nxe5 13 Nb5 Bf5 14 Be3 Rad8 15 Bc5, but he should have opted for 11...Qxe5! 12 Re1 Rd8, with reasonable chances to equalize.

b) Interesting is 10 Ra2!? which I investigated with one of my pupils: 10...Bxe5 (10...a4?! 11 b4! axb3 12 Rd2 Nf5 13 Qxb3 is unpleasant for Black due to the pin) 11 Nxe5 Nxe5 12 b3 Qxd1 13 Rxd1 a4 14 b4 Be6 15 Rc2 Bf5 16 Rb2 Rfd8 17 Rbd2! Rxd2 18 Nxd2 Bc2! (I prefer White after both 18...Nd3 19 Nf1 Nxc1 20 Rxc1 Rd8 21 Rd1 and 18...Rd8 19 f4) 19 Re1 N7g6 and Black's accurate play results in equality.

c) A final point is that 10 Bg5!? Bxb2 11 Ra2 f6, is given as equal by both Bareev and Morozevich, but after 12 Qxd8 Rxd8 13 Bxf6 gxf6 14 Rxb2 fxe5 15 Nc3 Rb8 16 Nb5 (Diagram 14), I personally still prefer White.

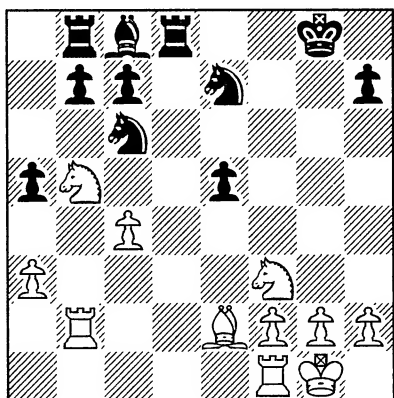


Diagram 14 (B)

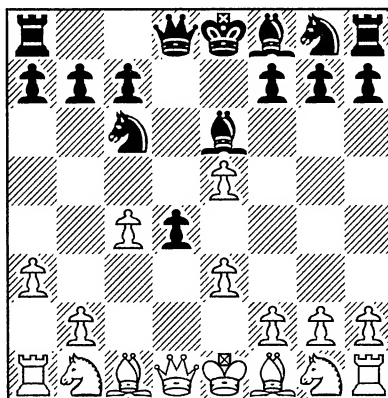


Diagram 15 (W)

C) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 a3 Nc6 5 e3 Be6 (Diagram 15)

The most stable square for this bishop.

6 Nf3 dxe3 7 Qxd8+ Rxd8 8 Bxe3 Nge7 9 Nc3 Nf5

I prefer this to 9...Ng6, after which 10 Nb5 Rd7 11 Nbd4 Ngxe5 12 Nxe5 Nxe5 13 Nxe6 fxe6 14 Be2 Nd3+ 15 Bxd3 Rxd3 16 Ke2 Rd8 17 b4, gave White a pleasant ending in V.Lazarev-V.Barsky, Moscow 1994.

10 Bf4

Black is fine after 10 Bg5, not because of 10...Rd7 11 Rd1 h6 12 Rxd7 Kxd7 13 Bd2, when White keeps a pull, but because of the simple 10...Be7!: for example, 11 Nb5 Rd7 12 Rd1 a6, or 11 Bxe7 Kxe7 12 Rc1 Rhe8 13 Be2 Nfd4 14 Nxd4 Rxd4, with full equality in both cases.

10...h6!? (Diagram 16)

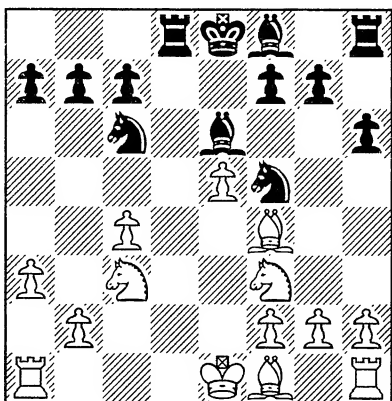


Diagram 16 (W)

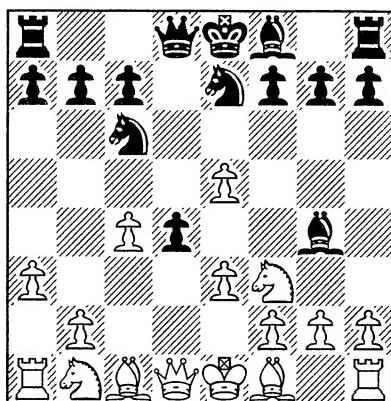


Diagram 17 (W)

A clever move which was played in V.Babula-M.Krasenkow, Brno 1994. Now:

a) After 11 h4, Black has a good move in 11...Ncd4! (in the game White was somewhat better after 11...Be7?! 12 Nd5! Bxd5 13 cxd5 Rxd5 14 Bc4 Rc5 15 Rc1) 12 Nxd4 Rxd4 with equality, because 13 g3 Bxc4 14 Be3? can be met by 14...Nxe3 15 fxe3 Rg4. This resource only works now that ...h6 for Black and h4 for White have been played, so in the analogous line with the h-pawns on starting squares, 10...Ncd4 would fail because at the very end of this variation White would have 15 h3 available.

b) Instead I suggest 11 Nd5!: for example, 11...Bxd5 12 cxd5 Rxd5 13 Bc4 (I prefer this to Babula's 13 e6 which doesn't convince me) 13...Rd7 14 Bb5! with a positional edge; or in the case of 11...g5!?, then 12 Nxc7+ Kd7 13 Nxe6 Kxe6 14 Bg3 (rather than 14 Bd2?! g4 when Black obtains excellent compensation) 14...g4 15 Nd2 Nxc3 16 hxg3 Nxe5 17 Be2 h5 18 0-0-0, and Black doesn't have enough for the pawn.

D) 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 a3 Nc6 5 e3 Nge7!?

This has recently been recommended by Nigel Davies in his *Gambiteer 2*. It is also very much in the style of the ever-influential Alexander Morozevich, who has popularized this move in some analogous positions. As I have a feeling that it may thus soon become popular, this approach deserves a special look especially as White's best continuation is far from obvious.

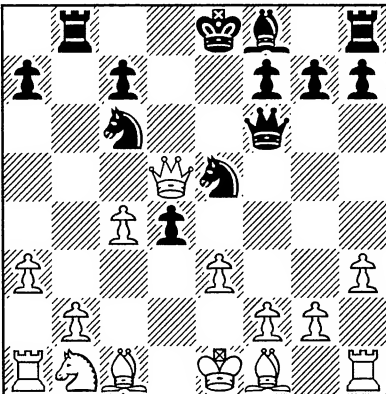
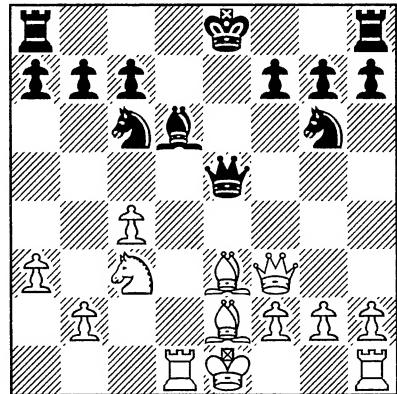
6 Nf3 Bg4 (Diagram 17) 7 exd4!

Releasing the tension. Alternatively:

a) I'm not keen on 7 Qa4!? because of 7...Bxf3! (instead 7...Nf5!? 8 e4 Nh4 9 Nbd2 was murky in B.Chatelbashev-K.Jedryczka, Figueres 2006) 8 gxf3 Qd7 9 f4 dxe3 10 Bxe3 Nxe5 with rough equality.

b) The most natural move is 7 Be2, but this yields only a draw after the seemingly forced sequence 7...dxe3 8 Qxd8+ Rxd8 9 Bxe3 Bxf3 10 Bxf3 Nxe5 11 Bxb7 Nxc4 12 Bxa7 Na5 13 Bf3 Nb3 14 Ra2 Nc1, with a repetition in J.Parker-N.Pert, Swansea 2006.

c) White forces Black's hand with 7 h3!? which is a reasonable alternative to the text: for example, 7...Bxf3 8 Qxf3 Nxe5 (8...Ng6!? can be met with the positional 9 e6! fxe6 10 b4 when White's bishop-pair should offer him a small pull) 9 Qxb7!? (snatching this pawn is just too tempting; it's also more combative than 9 Qe4 N7c6 10 Be2 g6 11 0-0 f5, when Black was fine in R.Wojtacsek-M.Kulejsa, Polish League 2005) 9...N7c6 10 Qb5 Rb8 11 Qd5 when I prefer White, although the position is far from clear after 11...Qf6!? **(Diagram 18)**.

**Diagram 18 (W)****Diagram 19 (B)**



ROLL THE DICE! Indeed, you should probably check the consequences of grabbing the b-pawn before giving 7 h3 a go in practice!

7...Bxf3 8 Qxf3 Qxd4

After 8...Nxd4 9 Qd3!? Black has more difficulty getting his pawn back: 9...Nec6 10 Be3 Bc5 11 Nc3 Nb3 (or 11...Nxe5 12 Qe4 0-0 13 0-0-0 when the bishop-pair and the pin along the d-file put White in the ascendency) 12 Nd5! (12 Rd1 Qxd3 13 Rxd3 Nxe5 14 Rd5 doesn't give much after 14...Nd7) 12...Nxa1 13 Bxc5 b6 14 Be3 Nxe5 15 Qe4 (or 15 Qc3) 15...0-0 16 Qxe5 Nc2+ 17 Ke2 and despite White's (temporarily!) messed-up development, Black will soon find himself two pieces for a rook down and with the clearly inferior position.

9 Nc3 Qxe5+ 10 Be2!

More ambitious than 10 Qe3 0-0-0 11 Qxe5 Nxe5 with sufficient counterplay.

10...Ng6

Gambiting the b-pawn is double-edged: 10...Nd4!? 11 Qxb7 Rd8 12 f4 Qe6 13 Kf2 Nec6 14 b4 is messy. Black obtains reasonable chances in the complications, although White holds on to the extra pawn and is in no immediate danger.

11 Be3 Bd6 12 Rd1 (Diagram 19)

White's advantage of the bishop-pair is likely to be significant.

What about the Chigorin Move order?

1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6 3 e3 (Diagram 20)

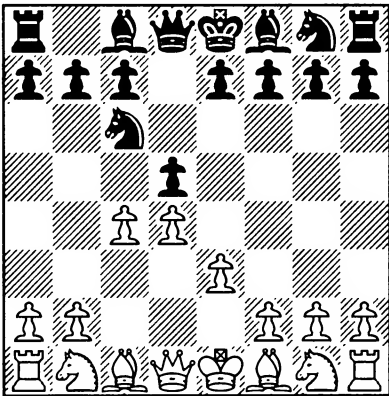


Diagram 20 (B)

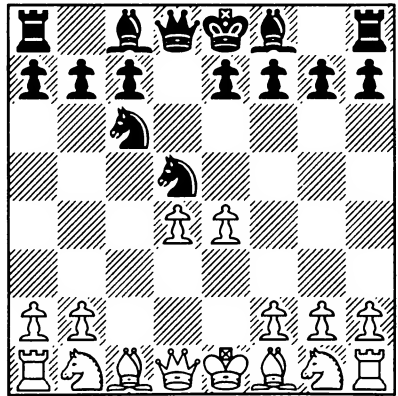


Diagram 21 (B)

3...e5

The thematic Chigorin response. However Black does have a couple of reasonable alternatives:

a) Against 3...Nf6, I quite like 4 cxd5, intending 4...Nxd5 (or 4...Qxd5 5 Nc3 and as Black has to move his queen, White must surely be better after something like 5...Qa5 6 Bd2 e6 7 Nf3 a6 8 Bc4 Qf5 9 Qe2 Nb4 10 e4) 5 e4! (**Diagram 21**). Nobody has ever played this, but I think it's the strongest continuation: 5...Ndb4 (both 5...Nf6 6 d5 and 5...Nb6 6 Be3 e5 7 d5 are also promising) 6 a3! Qxd4 7 axb4 Qxe4+ 8 Qe2! (8 Be3 Nxb4 9 Na3 e5 10 Nf3 Nd5 is less convincing) 8...Qxb4+ 9 Nc3 Nd4 10 Qd1, with advantage for White as the piece is worth more than the pawns.

b) The solid reply is 3...e6, but this is already taking Black away from a normal type of Chigorin and into the realm of the Black Knights' Tango. After 4 Nf3 Nf6 White has a choice:

b1) The slow move 5 a3!? avoids transposing into a Nimzo-Indian and leads to a further divide:

b11) White's idea worked well in V.Neverov-V.Bologan, St Petersburg 1995, as he was better after 5...g6 6 b4 Bg7 7 Bb2 Ne4 8 Nbd2 f5 9 Rc1 Ne7 10 Bd3 0-0 11 0-0 Bd7 12 Ne5.

b12) Something like the ultra-solid 5...Be7 6 Nc3 0-0 might be tough to crack.

b13) 5...dxc4 6 Bxc4 Bd6 7 Nc3 0-0 (**Diagram 22**) is a decent system for Black against which various attempts haven't been very impressive: 8 Bb5 (White has nothing really after 8 e4 e5 9 d5 Ne7, as in several games, nor following 8 b4 a6 9 Bb2 e5 10 Be2 Re8 11 dxe5 Nxe5 12 Qc2 Qe7 13 h3 Bd7 14 Nd4 c5, as in M.Botvinnik-H.Hecht, Belgrade 1969) 8...e5 9 Bxc6 exd4 10 Nxd4 (10 exd4 bxc6 is less good here: compared to a known Nimzo position, White has played the less useful a3 instead of 0-0, so Black should be fine) 10...bxc6 11 Nxc6 Qd7 12 Nd4 Bb7 13 f3 Rad8 14 Qa4 Qc8 15 0-0, gave Black adequate play for the pawn in L.Bernal Moro-N.Mitkov, Suances 1997.

b2) The best move is 5 Nc3.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: After 5...Bb4 6 Bd3 0-0 7 0-0 (Diagram 23) we have transposed to a solid line of the Nimzo-Indian!

I suspect that there aren't that many Chigorin players who would be expecting this! White can press and obtain something in most, if not all, lines. Here are a couple of typical ones:

b21) The direct approach is 7...dxc4 8 Bxc4 Bd6, but then there is 9 Bb5! e5 10 Bxc6 exd4 11 exd4 bxc6 12 Bg5 Bf5 13 Re1 Re8 14 Rxe8+ Qxe8 15 Bxf6 gxf6 16 Nh4, with advantage to White in V.Babula-V.Zemerov, Berlin 1996.

b22) The more canny 7...a6 (avoiding the annoying Bb5) 8 h3 h6 (Black waits patiently; possible too is 8...dxc4 9 Bxc4 Bd6 10 e4 e5 11 Be3, with only a slight pull

Dangerous Weapons: The Queen's Gambit

for White) 9 Re1 dxc4 10 Bxc4 Bd6 11 e4 e5 12 Be3 b5 13 Bb3 Bb7 14 dxe5 Nxe5 15 Nd4 b4 (if 15...Ng6, then 16 Nf5 Be5 17 Qc2 Re8 18 Rad1 Qc8 19 Bc5 Nxe4 20 Nxb6+ gxh6 21 Nxe4 Qf5 22 f3 is slightly better for White) 16 Nd5 Nxd5 17 Bxd5 Bxd5 18 exd5 Qf6 19 Qc2 Rfe8 20 Rad1 Rad8 21 Kf1 left White with a small but persistent edge in V.Hort-K.Langeweg, Amsterdam 1982.

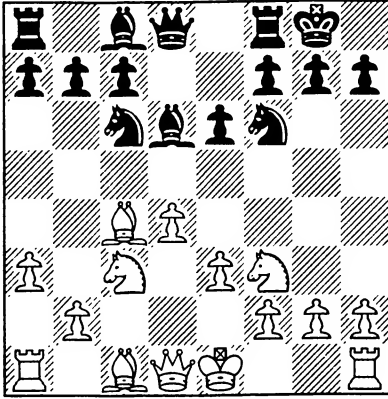


Diagram 22 (W)

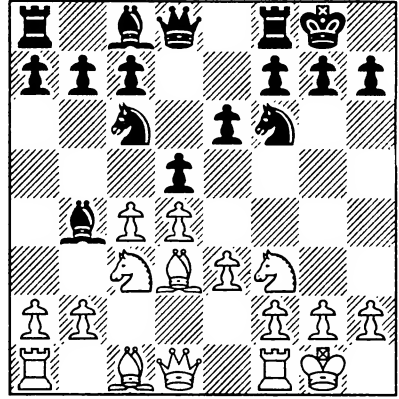


Diagram 23 (B)

4 dxe5 d4

Following 4...dxc4 5 Qxd8+ Kxd8 6 Bxc4, the comment in Morozevich and Barsky's book is surprising: 'bad for Black...he is a pawn down, he is unable to castle and also his f7-pawn is hanging.' However after the not-so-surprising move 6...Nxe5, things are surely not that grim!



BEWARE! Never blindly trust what you read! Even strong GMs are human and make mistakes, and sometimes make an off-hand comment which is then repeated without being checked.

Instead a convincing line for White involves 6 Nf3 (**Diagram 24**) and then 6...Bg4 7 Bxc4 Bxf3 8 gxf3 Nxe5 9 Be2 Nf6 10 Bd2 Bd6 11 Nc3 c6 12 0-0-0 Re8 13 Ne4 Nxe4 14 fxe4 Kc7 15 Rhg1 g6 16 f4 was S.Yuferov-S.Ivanenko, Moscow 1990, when the bishop-pair, active development and the advancing central pawn mass assured White of an advantage.

5 a3 (**Diagram 25**)

We have arrived back at our key position for countering both the Chigorin and the Albin.

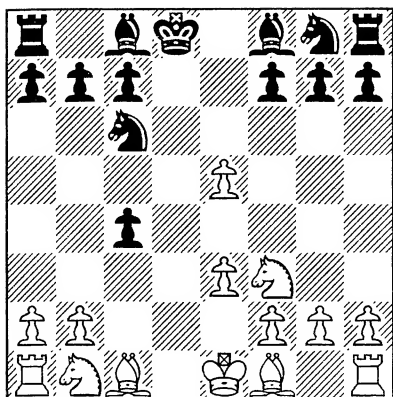


Diagram 24 (B)

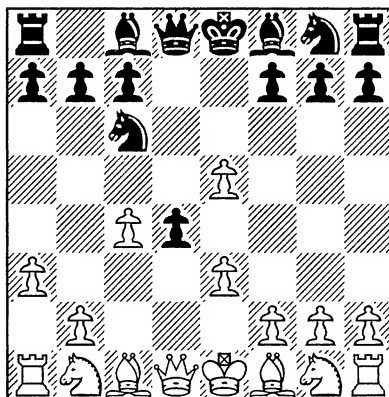


Diagram 25 (B)

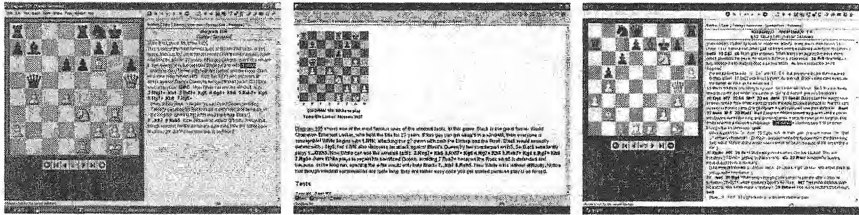
Conclusion




I consider my line a good practical alternative to the main lines of both the Chigorin and the Albin. White avoids a number of complex and popular positions, choosing instead to fight on his own territory. Furthermore, it is not at all clear that Black can equalize and indeed no less an expert than Morozevich has failed to do so thus far!

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